

Albert B. Ramsdell,
Salem, Mass.
Old Avalanche Again to the Fore!

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July 19, 1892.

No. 782.

\$2.50
a Year.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS.
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

Vol. XXXI.



OLD AVALANCHE WAS NERVED FOR THE TASK OF SAVING HIS BELOVED DEADWOOD DICK.

OR,

The Tandem Team's Full Score.

The Romance of a Rough Time.

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHOT THAT MISSED—HAND TO HAND.

It was a night too terrible for any living creature to be abroad, yet on the trail leading from Ruggles to the camp of Royal Flush, two persons were making weary progress in the direction of the latter place, in the face of the driving storm and through the darkness that hung over everything like some impenetrable pall.

These persons were a man and a woman, the

man walking ahead and leading the horses, the woman mounted and endeavoring to protect herself from the swirling rain under a waterproof cloak.

It was slow progress, too, and would have been altogether impossible had it not been that every now and then lightning illumined the darkness for a brief second, thus affording the man a glimpse of the trail and enabling him to proceed a few yards, when he would have to stop and wait for another flash to outline the way before venturing further.

Thunder was rolling and crashing almost incessantly, and at the side of the rugged gulch trail a rushing torrent was leaping and boiling along in its mad flight to the lower levels, here and there lapping over the trail as if hungry to gather up everything as it went along.

It was a night well calculated to strike terror to the stoutest heart, and considering the situation and surroundings it was evident the travelers were persons of more than usual nerve to forge ahead with such calmness as both exhibited.

Little conversation had passed between them, but the man spoke now and again to the horses in a soothing and encouraging way, trying to lend them confidence.

The woman, outwardly, was as undisturbed as though no danger existed, and when she spoke her tone exhibited nothing of nervousness or fear.

She spoke now.

"Dick, my Prince! I believe the storm grows worse every minute."

"Well, it is not growing any better, that is certain, brave little pard!"

"For your sake I am sorry you are hampered with me at a time like this. You could do so much better alone."

"And for your sake," the man responded, having to shout, as had the woman, in order to be heard, "I am sorry we ventured to push forward on such a night. We were unwise not to remain at Ruggles."

"I am the one to blame, Dick. I proposed it, knowing how anxious you were to get through to Royal Flush; I would not have you stop on my account. But, I am not afraid. Have you any idea how far the trail runs through this gulch? I hope it is not much further."

"No, I have not; was never over it before. It must be several miles yet to the camp. But, keep up your courage, Bonny Kate, and we shall weather the storm."

"I am not afraid, with you; but, would it not be better to stop at some favorable spot and wait for the fury of the storm to abate?"

"Impossible, Kate."

"Why?"

"Our danger lies right here."

"And it is the river that threatens us?"

"Yes; we must get out of this canyon as soon as possible."

"I am glad you have told me. You need not hesitate to tell me anything; I am no faint heart."

"Well do I know that. Yes, it's the river; I believe it is growing higher every moment. It may soon cover the trail."

No more was said, except that the man spoke a few words to the horses while he awaited another flash of lightning, and that soon coming, they once more moved forward.

And these two, the reader understands, were Deadwood Dick, Junior, with his matchless wife, noble Kodak Kate.

The fury of the tempest increased steadily, crashing with more force and fury, the thunder rolling and the lightning flashing yet more frequently and more blindingly.

The downpour grew heavier, while the rush and hiss of the now boiling river increased almost to a deafening roar, as if answering to the moaning of the wind.

Deadwood Dick had had experiences such as this before, but never, he believed, had he witnessed a storm quite so terrible.

Presently there came a flash of lightning more blinding and more lasting than any that had preceded, and with it, at the instant, a crash of thunder that seemed to rend the very foundations of the earth.

It was, as it were, several flashes blended in one long, blinding glare, and for many seconds the whole scene was as light as at noontide. And while this lasted, and while the thunder still boomed, there came a quick, sharp report, close at hand yet but faintly heard, and Deadwood Dick felt a bullet graze his face as it sped past his head, proof that he had been its intended mark.

The next instant darkness had closed in again, and everything was shut out from sight.

In the same moment, too, Dick felt a tug at the rein he had in hand; then came a jerk that tore it from his grasp and almost flung him into the seething river, while, accompanying, was a scream of pain or terror from Kodak Kate.

Then, yet following so soon as to be included in the same moment of time, almost, was the scraping of hoofs on the rocky trail, a neigh of fright, and the next instant a heavy plunge into the boiling torrent and all was over—at any rate all was silence save the thunder and the roar of the elements.

Dick groped wildly to find the horse that held his wife, but in vain, and all in vain did he call her name!

A moment later there was light again, when, with a thrill of horror, Dick saw that he was alone! Both horses and the woman rider had disappeared from sight!

"My God!" the horrified Prince of Detectives cried. "That I should lose her here in this raging flood! Kate! Kate! Kate! What assassin was it fired that shot at me? Oh, I'll know! I'll hunt him to his death!"

"And my purpose," cried a hoarse voice almost in his very ear, is to have your life here and now! Defend yourself if you can, you scourge of the earth! My shot missed you, but my knife cannot fail to find your heart. Your life—"

He was cut short, for, guided by his voice, Dick Bristol sprung upon him, all the passion of his stern nature fully aroused.

And together they fell, each seeking the other's life.

The fury of the elements was now at its height, that seemed tame as compared with the rage of these two men.

Flash after flash of vivid lightning came in quick succession, dispelling the darkness for a moment at a time, and revealing the men struggling in the death embrace on the very verge of the roaring waters, while the light glinted on the keen blades they wielded.

No further word was spoken by either; breath was far too precious, now; both fought with the fury of tigers. It was a fight to the death—it could be nothing less; and it looked as though it must result in death for both. It did not seem possible that either could escape to tell of the struggle.

Another flash, long, lasting, and almost paralyzing to sight, discovered the two foes almost fairly into the reaching water. The closing in of the darkness, then, with a crash as of the meeting of heavens and earth, lasting for some moments. Then light again, and—the combatants had vanished!

CHAPTER II.

PROVIDENCE PROVIDES A PRESERVER.

"GREAT hambone that discombobberated ther internal workin's of old Joner an' throwed him inter a fit o' indispersishun of ther spine of his back fer a week, ef et ain't my pard that was, Deadwood Dicky, Junior, ther chip off ther old block! Great hambone, yes! And dead— But, not ef ther Original Great Injun Annihilator kin fetch him around; great anticuated hambone, no!"

It was morning—the morning after the storm, and the sun was shining never more brightly.

Plodding along the range trail that led from the foot-hills up into the pass in the direction of the camp of Royal Flush, was a little, old, shriveled man, one who had evidently seen a long span of years.

He was about as homely an individual as the imagination can picture, and there was a peculiarity about him which, once seen and noted, was never to be forgotten, and that was, that he had no ears! At some time in the past those useful members had been cut off close to his head.

This peculiarity sufficed to reveal the old man's identity, and now that he speaks, as quoted, introduction becomes superfluous. It was he, Old Avalanche, the "Original Great Injun Annihilator," as he styled himself, the last remaining "corner" of the once terrific "Triangle."

As he spoke he bent over the body of a man that lay in his way, and upon which he had come abruptly on turning a bend in the trail.

The face, deathly white, was upturned to the clear, blue sky, and it looked as though Death had indeed set its grim seal there.

A hasty examination, however, brought an ejaculation to the lips of the old scout, and he began tearing open the man's clothes in order to learn the nature and extent of his injuries.

"Lor', Jerusha!" the old tramp soon cried. "Hev they been runnin' ye thro' a patent sassage masheen, Dicky, boy? Et looks like et; great hambone, yes! Whar hev ye been and what ye been doin'? Et looks like ye have been

jugglin' with a currogated can o' dynamite demolishun, or a reg'lar compound jabber of extincification. Dicky, boy, you hev been in a scrimmage!"

But, though he talked, he was not idle. He was examining the different wounds, of which there seemed to be at least a score, big and little, eager to learn whether there was one that must prove fatal.

"Great hambone that lubrickated ther gullick of old Joner!" he cried, as his examination progressed. "You used ter have as many lives as ary cat, Dicky, boy, but ef ye come off with one whole one this time ye will be lucky. Mebbly we kin take two of 'em and patch 'em up to make one, and mabby that'll work, ef et ain't a misfit; and I'm 'fraid 'twould be. Signs o' demolishun! What hev they been tryin' ter do to ye, anyhow? Lor' Jerusha! I haven't felt so bād sence Prudence Cordelia and Jeremiah took et into their heads ter lay off ther mortal coat-o' arms—hambone, no!"

He had by this time learned about the extent of Dick's injuries—for it was Deadwood Dick, as need hardly be affirmed.

"Hyer's a clus feeler fer yer heart, Dicky, boy," the old fellow mused, as he stopped one of the wounds with a bit of soft cloth, "and hyer's a reacher that went on a 'splorin' experdishun fer yer liver; an' darn me ef et don't look as if they set out ter make a clean job of dissectin' yer intarnel 'rangements. Great hambone that greased ther griddle fer old Joner and made soup fer Jupiter, ef this ain't jest wuss'n awful! Dicky, I'll do ther best I kin fer ye, but I don't garruntee that ye will come around—weepin' pilgrims, no! I hev seen some neat carvin' done in my time, but you ar' done up jest about the carvedest I ever did see. Hows'ever, I'll do ther best I kin. Poor Dicky! The last time I seen him he was a-kickin' wi' both feet and was as chipper as a gopher."

He proceeded with the work he had undertaken, and in a little while had the wounds dressed as well as possible under the circumstances.

All this time Dick had shown no signs of returning life, and the old ranger knew only by the faint movement of the heart that life had not gone out entirely. He lived, but that only.

His work done, the old man stood and surveyed his patient with a critical eye.

"I'd like ter know ther hull of this hyer business," he mused. "Ef Dicky is cut up so tarnal bad, what must t'other feller be? But, mebbly thar was more'n one at him. Et looks more like thar had been half a dozen or more, darn me ef et don't. By ther great hambone that saved Joner in ther time o' famine, Dicky, ef ye do pull out o' this hyer an' git well, and thar's a score ter wipe out, you kin jest count me in et. I'm ther same rip-roarin' old whirlwind o' demolishun that I allus was, only a trifle older, and ther last remainin' cardinal pint of ther oncet famous triangle. Ef thar's a lot o' condemned sinners ter be wiped off'n ther face of ther yarth, hyer's what's with ye, from fetlock to horns, clear up, you bet. And ef ye don't make a go of et, but pass in yer chips, then I'll devote ther remainder of my days ter tryin' ter git at ther bottom of all this and bring the wicked cuss to judgement fer what he's done to ye."

While muttering thus, the old fellow was looking about for signs.

They were scarce, however. Dick's clothes were water-soaked, and the trail showed that the river had washed over it during the night, from which Old Avalanche drew the deduction that the body had been cast up by the swift sweep of the torrent.

If that was the case, then the trouble had occurred further up the trail, and he soon saw the uselessness of looking for a clew, or signs, after such a flood had been over the ground.

"Trail is wiped out, slick and clean," he told himself. "No 'arthly use o' my foolin' away more time here; great hambone, no! Now, what's ter be did? Time used ter be when I could shoulder a feller o' Dicky's size and carry him all day. Wonder ef them days is done? Ef I only had Prudence Cordelia here now— But, I ha'n't, and no use mournin' over that. Prudence was a jewel in ther rough, but she had ter pay the debt o' natur' when she had gone past ripe mule age, ther same as I shall have ter settle up my own score afore many years more come and go over my dome o' interlock. But, this ain't helpin' Dicky; hambone, no! I'll jest bend my spinal columbiad and see how much hoss-power is left in the old hulk, anyhow. Ef I rupture a vessel et can't do no harm, fer thar is nothin' left of me now but skin, gristle an' bone. Hyer goes, one fer me and two fer Dicky."

So he kept up his muttering, while preparing

to lift and carry the insensible man. And now, having laid hold firmly, he lifted him to his shoulder and started forward on his way up the trail.

In spite of his age and his shriveled body, Old Avalanche was nerved for the task of saving his beloved Deadwood Dick.

Nor did he seem to tire greatly as he proceeded.

Only twice, in a distance of more than a mile, did he pause to rest, and even then it seemed to be only because an inviting boulder tempted him.

He did not lay his burden down, but simply sat for a few moments on the boulder, and then was off again, arriving finally at a simple cabin perched high up on a ledge that overlooked a thriving camp below.

He had turned off from the main trail, and from all appearances this was an out-of-the-way place little frequented.

Pushing open the door, he entered and laid his burden upon a rude bunk that was built against the wall at one side of the cabin, and as he did so he straightened up with a sigh of relief.

"Great hambone that swum in ther soup-pot of old Joner!" he cried. "I would never 'a' believed et; Lor' Jerusha, no! I had begun ter think that I was nothin' but a discripted and discombobberated chunk o' old age, jest walkin' around ter save funeral expense; but now I'll be hanged ef I don't feel that me youth is renewed like ther eagle, or words ter that effect! I wouldn't 'a' believed I could carry a load like that twenty steps. Ha! ha! ha! Old Avalanche, Great Original Injun Annihilator, ther last remainin' monnymint of ther great Triangle, thar's some vital sparks in your old hulk yet!"

It was two days later when Deadwood Dick opened his eyes for the first time after his terrible fight.

Old Avalanche was out at the time, having gone down to the camp for some supplies, but it was about time for him to return.

In going out he had secured the door, and so, on opening his eyes, Dick was in semi-darkness, the only light he had coming through an apology for a window that was partly boarded up.

He made an effort to rise, but found that he was too weak.

This discovery startled him, and he tried hard to think where he could be or what had happened.

Gradually past events shaped themselves in his mind; then his recent doings; then all came back to him like a flash.

"Kate!" was the first word he uttered.

It was in a forced whisper, for he was too weak to speak aloud.

He remembered now the storm, the shot, the sudden fall of the horse into the torrent, his hand-to-hand encounter with his foe, and then—a blank.

"She is dead," he mused, "dead, dead! Why was my spirit not permitted to make the voyage with hers? And where am I? How came I here? To judge by my weakness, I have had a close call—Ugh!"

A shiver ran over him as he thought of that terrible fight, and of the more terrible knife that he had felt so many times slashing his body.

"Perhaps I am going to live—to get well," his thoughts ran. "If I do, there will be no hiding-place on earth for Red Roy where he can escape my vengeance. He it was who struck me down; that I know; he alone would have been abroad on that terrible night."

He heard a step without, and his eyes sought the door.

The door opened, and into the room stepped the old ranger, his eyes at once seeking the bed.

"Great hambone!" he cried, with delight, dropping his bundles and springing forward to the bunk. "Great eternal and everlastin' old hambone! Dicky, ye don't know how tickled I am ter see ye open them 'ar peepers o' yourn! Bless yer leetle heart, boyee, this hyer is ther happiest day in me whole career; great pre-nambulatin' hambone, yes!"

The old man knelt beside the bunk, fondling Dick's hair with his hand, and actually kissed him, while tears of joy appeared in his old eyes.

"Do ye know me, Dicky, boy?" he asked.

"Do ye reckonize ther great old ten-pin? ther rip-roarin' avalanche o' demolishun? This is me, ther Great Original Injun Annihilator; Old Avalanche, ther sun-baked and wind-dried old relic of bygone generashuns! Do ye know me?"

"Old Avalanche!" Dick faintly exclaimed.

"Ther same, ther same!" the overjoyed old fellow cried, taking Dick's weak hand in his own and pressing it fondly. "This hyer is me,

Dicky, jest as chipper as ever I was, and a dozen years younger than I was a couple o' days ago, too. Ye can't begin ter guess how mighty happy I feel, ter see you on ther mend. I tell ye, Dicky, ye have been mighty near to ther dark river this time, and no doubtin' that. I have been doctor and nuss and everything else to ye sence I found ye. I've jest turned myself inter a bull hospitlity—great hambone, yes!"

"Where did you find me?"

Old Avalanche had to bend low to catch the weakly spoken words.

"Find ye? Why, Dicky, boy, I found ye in ther canyon about a mile from here, and you was jest ther wu'st carved-up corpse that I ever sot eyes on. I toted ye home byer, and I have been two whole days pluggin' up ther noomerous holes in your systum; fact, by 'tarnel. Great hambone that old Joner had in his vest pocket when ther whale gobbled him! ye looked as if ye had been run through a patent double-barreled redocin' engine o' demolishun. I'm jest dyin' ter hear all about et, and ter know who et was done ye up so; but I won't ask ye now, fer ye mustn't talk. Ye hain't got but a spark and a quarter o' life in yer hull body, and you want ter be mighty keerful of it, I'm tellin' ye, or it will go out altogether—Lor' Jerusha, yes!"

During the next three days the old ranger kept himself out of Dick's sight as much as possible, in order to keep him from talking.

On the fourth day, seeing that Dick was so much stronger, he gave way and allowed him to talk. The truth was, he was as eager as Dick, and was filled with curiosity.

He had already told Dick all there was to tell about the manner in which he had found him, and about his bringing him to his cabin and caring for him, and now he was as eager to ask questions as Dick was to question him.

Dick had been appealing to him, on every occasion, but to the present the old man had refused to listen to anything.

"I guess et won't hurt ye to talk a little now, Dicky, boy," he said, "so I will listen ter what et is ye pear so anxious to tell me. Spin et right out, now, but take et slow and easy."

"It is my wife I want to ask about," said Dick. "My talking could not do me half the harm this terrible suspense is doing. It is killing me. Did you find her body in the canyon? Did you find the carcasses of the horses? Tell me the truth, Avalanche."

"Great hambone that discombobberated ther gullick o' old Joner! Jest es if I ever dealt in any other sort o' article. No, Dicky, boy, I didn't see no sign of ary boss or gal. Ef they went down, it's likely they went down ter stay, fer that fresbet wasn't no plaything; hambone, no! But, who was et done ye up so?"

"Then she is dead, dead. I have nothing to live for, nothing save vengeance, and that I must have. You ask who it was who dealt me this blow. Have you ever heard of Red Roy, the Oregon Outlaw?"

"Great currogated signs o' demolishun! Do ye mean to tell me he's ther cur what done et?"

"I see you have heard of him. Yes, he it was, and this is the second time he has come near fixin' me out. But, he has failed, and there shall come a day of reckoning for him as soon as I am able to take the trail!"

CHAPTER III.

RED ROY AT ROYAL FLUSH.

ROYAL FLUSH was a new camp and a thriving place.

It was both old and new, to speak of it in that paradoxical way. It had an old mine that had been abandoned years before, and the cabins and shanties of that period were about all gone.

In point of fact, the only one that remained was the one occupied by Old Avalanche and Deadwood Dick.

With the abandonment of the mine had come the desertion of the camp, and it soon became the abiding-place of owls and coyotes. And this state of affairs lasted for a considerable number of years.

Then came new discoveries, brought about by a party of skilled prospectors who followed the old trail into the camp, and made an examination of the old mine, and the old camp burst into life anew, and was now flourishing like the green bay tree beside running waters.

The old mine was discovered to be immensely rich, after all. Had the deserters worked it but another day they would have found it so; but, tired with the fruitless work of months, seeing the ore vein growing thinner each day, they had thrown down their tools and gone away in

despair, leaving the fruit of their toil for strangers to harvest.

And not only had the old mine proved a bonanza, but others nearly as good had been speedily located, and at once the camp took on a boom that had not yet begun to decline. Buildings sprung up in a night, as it were, and the valley was now teeming with a population of several thousands.

There were, at the time of our story, hotels, saloons, stores, gambling dens, and one playhouse. Added to these were any number of shanties—of every sort and description, with tents in great variety dotting the bottom here and there, and creeping well up on the hill-sides.

The mayor of this camp of Royal Flush was one Simon MacCraw.

He was an Irishman, though he laid claim to being Scotch. That, however, was a small matter to everybody but himself. There was a certain "Sawney" drawl in his speech, but not a pronounced brogue.

This Simon MacCraw had been among the re-discoverers of the valley and the mine, and he had been the one to give the place the name it bore. When they "struck it rich" in the old shaft, he was the one to declare it a "royal flush," and at once that name had struck them all favorably as the name for the camp.

MacCraw was a shrewd fellow, and while others had spent their time in staking claims here and there around the valley where there were "pay" signs, he quietly staked town lots in the best part of the bottom, and with the increase of population came his natural increase of wealth, till now he was regarded as something of a czar on a small scale.

He held the office of mayor, as said, and was about everything else of importance about the camp besides.

MacCraw, getting hold of more money, naturally, than any one else among the discoverers, found it to his profit to advance loans upon good security, and the outgrowth of that was a regular, or irregular, banking business.

Yes, Royal Flush had, among its other great acquisitions, a bank, and of that bank Simon MacCraw was everything, from president to messenger. It was his, from doorstep to safe, with all the contents thereof, and he was growing rich out of that alone, to say nothing about his other interests.

He was seated in his office one day, his office at the bank, where public as well as private business was transacted, when a stranger entered.

MacCraw was alone at the time.

It was that hour of the day when the camp was dullest, and when MacCraw was inclined to drop off into a nap.

When the stranger entered, he was nearly asleep, his feet on the desk and his hands clasped comfortably across his front, and he roused up at once, attentive to business.

There was more than that, however, to make him wake. There was something peculiar about the appearance of this man, and the first peculiarity the mayor noticed was that he was masked. And immediately following that was made the discovery that he was armed.

"Don't excite yourself, sir," the man said, quietly. "Just hold up your hands comfortably while I talk to you."

The glint of a revolver brought about quick compliance with that reasonable request, while MacCraw demanded:

"Who are you, and what d'ye want hyer?"

"Ever hear of Red Roy, the Oregon Outlaw?" the masked stranger asked, in his quiet way.

The Mayor of Royal Flush paled, proving that he had.

It was the first appearance of the outlaw there, but he had been heard of, for his unearthing at Basalt Butte had been heralded far and near.

Before the mayor had time to respond verbally he continued:

"I supposed you had, and thought I would mention who I am before you made the mistake of supposing you could bluff me, or anything of that sort. If you make a single outcry, or a single move to get a weapon in hand, you are as good as dead and buried. I am Red Roy."

The mayor's eyes were now bulging out like twin door knobs, and his mouth was agape.

While not exactly a coward, the reputation of this outlaw, and the manner in which he had made himself known, had, so to say, "taken the starch out of him."

"What do you want?" he managed to ask.

The question was needless, for he apprehended only too well what the object of the visit was.

"Why, I have learned that you do considerable banking business here," was the cool re-

sponse, "and I thought I would drop around and go into partnership with you, as it were."

"Partnership!"

"Exactly. I'll chip in my experience against your capital, you see, and I think it will work first rate."

MacCraw did not exactly see the point of the joke.

"I don't jst get onto what you mean," he declared. "If you are tryin' to be funny, you take a poor time to show yer smartness."

"Thank you, sir. I have no intention of being funny. I mean business, as pure and simple as can be. When I say I will chip in my experience against your capital, I mean it."

"But, I don't want a partner."

"That is generally the objection I hear every time. However, this is a peculiar world, and we cannot have everything to our liking. Now, regarding my experience in financial matters, I have had considerable, and it has been directed against capital on every occasion."

"You mean to rob me!"

"Not so, sir; partners would not put it that way. I only want you to declare a dividend in my favor. I will take for my share whatever cash you happen to have on hand at the present moment, and you may have everything else."

"You rascal, you! I'd like to have the drop on ye for jest one moment, and I'd fix ye!"

"Oh! I have no doubt about that. I have been told the same a good many times, my dear sir. As it is, though, I have the drop on you, and I'll have to request you to come out with your long green. Don't let's have any unpleasantness, now, but be cheerful about it, since you cannot help yourself."

There were a good many cool characters in this camp of Royal Flush, and the mayor and banker had seen a good many cool deeds performed by them; but for downright icy nerve the present case capped the stack.

Here it was broad daylight; any number of men were within easy call; the door and windows were wide open; customers were liable to drop in at any moment; and yet this dare-devil proposed robbing the safe and getting away with its contents. It would be impossible!

So the mayor quickly decided in his mind. Before the robber could get half a dozen paces away from the building he would be able to raise the alarm, and bullets would speedily bring him to time.

"I guess you have it about right," he responded, as cheerfully as possible, acting upon that thought. "The money is there in the safe, and it is unlocked. Help yourself to it."

At that moment came a step on the narrow piazza in front of the building.

The mayor looked hopeful in an instant, while the outlaw took a couple of steps backward in haste, still keeping the mayor covered.

A man entered the room in a leisurely manner, his hands in his pockets and his hat set back upon his head.

"Hullo! what's wrong with ye, MacCraw?" he greeted, seeing by the mayor's face that something was out of order.

"Right here is what's wrong, sir," spoke up the robber, from the left rear.

The man turned, gave a great start, and his face paled.

"I'm being robbed, that's what's the matter, Hank," the mayor exploded. "I wish you could 'a' known it 'fore ye came in."

"This is one of the times when knowledge comes too late," coolly remarked the outlaw, stepping to the front again, with now a weapon in each hand covering both of them. "Be very quiet and orderly, now, gentlemen, and nothing will drop. If you don't— Well, my name is Red Roy."

"Red Roy!"

So the man called Hank gasped, his face growing as ashy as the mayor's.

This man was one Hank Waldon, and he was MacCraw's right-hand man, being his constable, police force, and what not.

"That is what I am called," the outlaw assured, with a bow of mock politeness. "You have heard of me, so for your own good do not cross me and so bring trouble upon yourself."

"Darn et! but I wish I had knowed et afore I kem in; thar would be one outlaw ther less in ther woolly West."

"I don't doubt your word, sir. But, now to business. The mayor tells me his ready money is in that safe there. I want you to get it out and do it up in a compact parcel for me."

"No, I'm blowed if I will!"

"You'll certainly be blowed if you don't," declared the outlaw, grimly.

"Ye darsn't shoot; yer shot would bring a

crowd hyer in a minute. You have got yourself inter trouble—"

"Oh! no," with a light laugh, "don't fool yourself that way. If it comes to that, the crowd will find two dead men here awaiting them, that is sure. Red Roy never misses his mark."

So quietly was this said, that the two men marveled at his daring.

"Be quick, now, about obeying my order," Red Roy directed.

His weapon came up a little more threateningly, and Hank stepped toward the safe, looking helplessly at the mayor as he did so.

"You had better do it," the mayor told him.

He still had his first plan in mind, and knowing that Waldon was a good shot, he had no idea the robber could get away with the plunder.

Red Roy was taking it as easy as though no danger threatened him, and as though he had hours instead of minutes in which to transact his business at the bank.

The mayor's man stepped to the safe, threw open the door, and began taking out the money.

"That little grip will be just the thing," the outlaw directed, pointing to a small leather bag that hung on the wall near by.

It was one the mayor used when he had occasion to take out a quantity of money for any purpose.

Hank took it down, and began cramming the money into it.

The outlaw was where he could see into the safe, so there was no chance to trick him any.

There was, in all, several thousand dollars, and it made quite a haul, or it would so make, if the outlaw succeeded in getting away with it.

When it had all been crammed into the bag, Hank closed the bag and put it on the corner of the mayor's desk nearest the outlaw, stepping back with a sullen look upon his face.

"Now, one favor more I must ask of you, gentlemen," said the outlaw.

He had put away one weapon now, and as he spoke he stepped forward and laid hold upon the grip.

"And what's that?" Hank growled.

"I must request you to put your weapons in the safe and lock the door upon them."

The mayor gave vent to another explosion of rage.

"Have a care, mayor, have a care," Red Roy cautioned. "You know the kind of man you are dealing with in me. If you speak as loud as that again it will be the signal for your death. Do as I order, both of you."

This was permission for them to take their weapons in hand, but the outlaw held the best cards in the game, as they knew.

Their weapons appeared in sight, and Hank cast one look at the outlaw, as if calculating his chances for a snap shot at him, but the keen eyes that peered at him from behind the red mask led him to forego the desire.

Their weapons were put in the safe, and the door swung to and locked, and it was done.

"I am greatly obliged to you, gentlemen," the outlaw then said. "You have saved me lots of trouble, and have saved your own lives. We have much to congratulate ourselves upon, all around. Now, adieu."

He was backing to the door while speaking, and with that final word he was gone.

Immediately the beat of a horse's hoofs was heard, and when the mayor and his man sprung out they saw the outlaw dashing up the valley.

The mayor raised a great cry at once, his man helping him in the effort, and attention was called to the disappearing horseman; but before any shots could be fired the outlaw was out of range.

Such had been the advent of Red Roy into this rich young camp of Royal Flush.

The camp ran wild with excitement, the mayor offered a big reward, and steps were taken to get word to the famous detective, Deadwood Dick, Junior.

But, to this time, the time of our story, the detective had not put in his appearance, nor had the outlaw been seen again. Some weeks had passed, and the matter had grown old in the minds of the camp's citizens.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAD WOMAN AND OLD AVALANCHE.

To return to the conversation between Deadwood Dick and Old Avalanche.

When told by Dick that it had been Red Roy who had "carved him up" in so terrible a manner, the old ranger showed great excitement.

"But, I see you have heard of the rascal," Dick observed. "What do you know about him?"

"Great currogated hambone that proved a

godsend ter old Joner in ther time o' devastatin' famine!" the old man exclaimed. "Yes, I have heerd tell of him, some, Dicky, boy. He was hyer at this camp o' Royal Flush not many moons ago, and cleaned things out as slick as wax."

"Yes, I know he was."

"Ye knowed et?"

"Yes."

"Seems ter me you must 'a' follered him up, then. I heerd tell of ther had hook-up ye had with him at Basalt Butte, and I might 'a' knowed ye wouldn't never give up till ye had downed him; but, he kem mighty clus to gettin' ther best of ye this time, darn me ef he didn't. Ye was cut up jest bee-yoo-tee-ful—great hambone, yes! Looked as if ye had been monkeyin' with a compound chopper o' devastatin' destruction."

"Yes, curse him! he had me foul. He had on his coat of chain mail, while I had mine off. I tried to fix him, but it was no use."

"Tell me all about et, Dicky, boy."

Dick told the story of his campaign against the outlaw, bringing it down to the time of his recent fight.

"Great currogated signs o' corrodin' demolishun!" Old Avalanche cried. "Ye have good cause ter probe fer his vile heart, Dicky, and right hyer's what's with ye in ther thing, from spur to topknot! I'm ther same old rampagin' whirlwind o' devastatin' destruction that I allus was, and ef we don't make et hot fer him, when you git well, then we'll go hang our harps on ther willers, that's all—great hambone, yes! Count me in et, Dicky, from the ground up."

"Thank you, Avalanche," said Dick, "and I accept your offer. You have helped me before, and no doubt you are good for another round or two. By the way, have you told any one I am here?"

"Great fursaken old hambone with which Joner knocked ther stuffin' out of ther juggernaut o' heathendom! do ye take me fer a loon altogether, Dicky? Do ye s'pose fer a single minnit o' perambulatin' time that I'd go and do that, and mebbly bring down a swarm of pizen vultures ter gobble ye up? Great degenerated old hambone, no!"

"I am glad of that. You must keep it a secret till I get upon my pins, and then we'll proceed to make it warm for them. But, to judge by my weakness, it is likely to be a long day before I am myself again."

"Oh, I don't know, Dicky; you are good meat, every ounce of ye, and a month will do wonders fer ye."

"A month! Good heavens, Avalanche, how can I remain idle a month? It will kill me, not knowing the fate of my wife. These are dark days for me, old pard."

"I allow they be, Dicky, but et won't kill ye half as quick to remain quiet here as it will ter try to put on steam afore yer b'iler gets strong enough ter stand ther pressure. Thar's no help fer et, so ye will have ter grin and bear et."

"I know, I know; but it is terrible. Not knowing whether my wife be living or dead, and to know that my wrongs are unavenged. It is hard, Avalanche, hard indeed, but as you say, there is no help for it, and I must wait."

"That's boss sense, Dicky, boy, every time. Et won't do ter worry about et, but ye kin amuse yerself plannin' what a sweet dose o' revenge ye are goin' ter have when ye do git at et."

"And you haven't heard anything in the camp concerning the finding of the body of a woman—"

"Lor' Jerusha, Dicky, ef ye have asked me that oncet ye have asked me forty times! But, then, I don't complain, fer I know jest how ye feel. I remember how I felt when Prudence Cordelia gev ther last twitch of her off hind foot, that terrible engine o' devastatin' death ter Injuns. No, I haven't heerd anything, and et's plain that nothin' of ther sort hev been diskivered, or it would be talked about down thar in ther camp."

"It is hard, Avalanche, hard, to be laid out helpless like this when you have work to do."

"I know et, Dicky; no one knows et better 'n I do. I have been thar myself, and I kin fully 'presheate ther sittocashun—great hambone, yes! But, by ther ragin' signs o' Demmycratic demolishun what accompanied Moses when he went cavoortin' around through ther rushes, thar will be somethin' harder when we put on our war-paint an' grip our hawkatoms to do battle with that concentrated chunk o' essence o' all that's vile on airth: Lor' Jerusha, yes!"

"But, you say Red Roy has been here, which I knew; and I want to find out all I can about him."

"And I'll tell ye, too. How did you know et, though?"

"Why, I received a letter from the Mayor of Royal Flush, putting me on track of the rascal again, and I was coming here to tackle him for another round when he laid me out."

"That was ther way of et, eh? Well, ther ma'r had good reason ter send fer somebody, I'm tellin' ye."

Thereupon the old ranger told Dick all about the raid Red Roy had made on MacCraw and his bank.

"And wasn't ther ma'r wild!" he wound up the yarn. "Great picturated and attenevated old hambone, I should say he was, some! He slapped up a big reward, offerin' a thousand more or less fer ther cuss, and then he went around ther camp swearin' and pullin' out his hair wuss 'n old Nebbycudneezer when ther p'izen critters from up-range tapped ther river and got ther bulge on him. But, that didn't do no good, and he had ter take up with et; ther best he could."

"And the fellow hasn't been heard of since?"

"Not ter my knowin'."

"And how long ago was that?"

"Two or three weeks, more or less."

"It is possible, then, that he has gone somewhere else to carry on his evil game. But, he was certainly here when I came."

"Et looks a leetle that way, that's so; hambone, yes!"

"Well, Avalanche, there is no use speculating. You keep your eyes and ears open—"

"Me ears, Dicky?"

"Well, I mean keep your sight and hearing on the alert, and whatever you learn at the camp let me know."

"I'll do thar, o' course; hambone, yes! And ef I git a sight on him wi' my faithful old Evans hyer, thar will be one outlaw ther less in ther land o'—"

"No, Avalanche, no."

"Why for not so?"

"Because he must die by my hand, and mine alone!"

"Oh! wull, I didn't think o' that. But, from all 'counts he won't put himself in my way, I guess. He's too wary."

"Yes, he is a bad one. But, we will down him, Avalanche, or get downed ourselves. By the way, what of Pistol Pocket? When have you been there? I must try, somehow, to divert my thoughts."

"Pistol Pocket? Lor' Jerusha! et is a city out an' out, Dicky, boy! Great hambone that dislocated ther larynx of old Joner, and ripped up his dierframm! ye wouldn't know ther place! How many moons is et sence you wur thar, anyhow? Hev ye been thar sence I seen ye last time?"

"No; I have not been there since I parted with you and Johnny Smile, at Bismarck."

"Then ye won't know ther city when ye see et, that's all. Ther last time I was thar they was askin' about you, and that lord duke o' yours—"

"You mean Sir Clyde Carleton?"

"That's his handle, I reckon; ther feller what does business in your name; he told me sort o' private that you ar' wuth millions! Said real 'state had riz to five hundred dollars a foot on ther main street."

"Yes, I know. His letters have been urging me to come and relieve him of his embarrassment of riches for some time. I'm going, too, if I live through this campaign. But, what of Johnny Smile?"

"Oh! Lor' Jerusha! he is thar as big as life. He's got a soft snap in your mine office 'long with Sir Clyde, and he's as happy as a clam. Great hambone that perplexed old Joner when he went inter winter quarters! ef you won't open yer eyes when ye see ther place! Why, et's a reg'lar hummer of a town, with ther main street paved, and lit up wi' them new-fangled lickery lights, or whatever ye call 'em, and—"

Further talk was interrupted in a sudden and unlooked-for manner.

A woman's scream was heard, and it did not seem to be a great distance from the cabin.

"Great hambone what tickled ther gullick of old Joner!" ejaculated the old scout. "What's that?"

"It's a woman's voice," cried Dick, in as strong a whisper as he could utter. "Go and find out what is wrong. Heavens! that I should be as helpless as this!"

The cry was heard again.

"Great antediluvian hambone what crossed Jordan at ther time when ther red-skins from up range swooped down and made et hot—"

Old Avalanche was moving and talking at the

same time, and that was all Dick heard of his peculiar speech.

Dick heard the cry again; then an exclamation from the old man, and after that two voices in rapid exchange of words, one being the ranger's and the other that of a woman.

When the old man stepped out of the cabin a strange sight met his gaze.

There, on the very verge of the cliff that overlooked the camp, stood a woman in a truly pitiable condition.

Her hair was flying in a stiff breeze, and her clothing was so badly torn that it hardly served to cover her form decently. She was wringing her hands and moaning wildly.

"Great hambone what distorted ther stum-jack of old Joner! ef she ain't as crazy as a bed-bug then I'm a howlin' liar; and she'll topple off'n thar afore she knows et if she don't look out— Hi! there, gal; what's ther cavoortin' diffikilty wi' ye?"

The woman turned at once, and the old ranger saw that she had been beautiful—was beautiful even now in spite of all.

"Save him, oh! save him!" she appealed piteously.

"Save who, gal?"

The old fellow was advancing rapidly to the ledge as he spoke.

"Save him, him! He has gone down, down, down—"

"Great articulated hambone! You will be goin' down, too, ef ye don't keep back from thar!"

Old Avalanche had interrupted her by catching hold of her bare arm and pulling her back from the dangerous verge.

And having done that, he stepped to the edge with care and looked down.

He was searching for the body of some one who, as he supposed from the woman's manner, had fallen over and down to the flats far below.

CHAPTER V.

DEADWOOD DICK'S CLEVER SCHEME.

THE old ranger looked in vain. His sight was good, even better at long range than at short, and it took him but a moment to discover that nobody had fallen from the cliff, at any rate not very recently, as he had taken to be the case.

"Thar ain't nobody thar, gal!" he declared, straightening up and facing the wild-eyed woman.

"In the water," she moaned. "In the roaring, hissing water! Save him, oh! save him!"

"Great and only perticklarized old hambone what Joner used fer a toothpick!" the old man cried, a sudden thought striking him. "What a mean and miserable old coyote I am, anyhow! Why didn't I guess et afore? This must be ther gal Dicky is pluin' away about, like as if he had lingersin' consumption of ther diarframm."

"Won't you save him! Can't you save him?"

So the woman was piteously exclaiming, wringing her hands and looking at the old ranger with eyes insanely bright.

"Clean gone," Avalanche said to himself. "If she wasn't, she'd have more regard fer her 'pearance; that's woman natur'."

"See hyer, gal," he said kindly, "jest tell me all about et, can't ye, an' mebbly I kin help ye some."

Now that he was able to look at her more closely he could see that she was bruised and scratched in a hundred places. There were stains of blood upon the remnant of her clothing.

She did not respond, but only moaned.

"Et's her; great hambone, yes!" the old scout exclaimed. "Thar ain't no doubt about et in my mind. And she looks as ef she had been through the same snortin' and ragin' cyclone eperdemick that ripped Dicky up so 'tarnel bad. She's been in that flood, that's whar she's been, and ther wonder is that et didn't do her up wuss'n she is. Great am I goin' ter do slewed ther Fillersteens! What am I goin' ter do with her?"

He scratched his head for an idea.

"Gal," he demanded, "who are ye, anyhow?"

"Can't you find him?" she cried. "Won't the water give him up?"

"Mad, as mad as kin be," muttered the old scout, puzzled.

"Save him, oh! save him!" she pleaded.

"See hyer," and Avalanche stepped nearer. "who is et ye want saved? Is et Deadwood Dicky?"

The woman gave a start at mention of that name, a cry escaped her, and she clapped her hands to her head as if to hold her ideas fixed.

For a single moment the light of reason had gleamed in her eyes, but it went out again in spite of her efforts.

"Great ramificated old hambone!" cried the old scout, "but that 'ar was a cluss guess."

"Save him! save him!" piteously.

"Yas, I'll see to that part of et, my gal; hambone, yes! You jest come along wi' me and I'll show ye whar he is. Don't be skart at me, fer I'm a heap better'n I look, as Dicky will tell ye."

He laid hold upon her wrist, gently, and drew her toward the cabin.

She went with him in a listless way, as though she had no thought or idea above the one burden of her lament.

"Won't you save him?" she kept repeating in exclamation. "Can't you save him? Oh! the rain, the water, the awful lightning! Save him, save him!"

"You stand right thar about two brief seconds and a quarter," Old Avalanche directed, when they reached the door, "and then I'll fetch ye in. 'Et won't do," he whispered, "ter spring et onto him too sudden."

He left her there and stepped inside.

Deadwood Dick had risen to his elbow, in spite of wounds and weakness, impatient to learn who the woman was.

He had a hope, a wild, longing hope, that it might be his wife, alive. And the moment the old scout appeared he demanded to know what he had learned.

"Great ancient and honeycombed old hambone!" the old man cried, at sight of him, "what ar' ye doin' in that persishun? Do ye want ter rupturate some o' them 'ar wounds an'—"

"Tell me who it is," Dick demanded, with all the strength he could force.

He fell back upon his rude pillow as he put the question, almost exhausted with the effort he had made.

"Yas, that is what I'm hyer fer, but by ther ragin' and roarin' signs o' demolishun ef you don't keep quiet thar will be trouble, and you'll be in et. Now, do ye think ye kin stand a shock, Dicky?"

"I can stand anything better than suspense," answered Dick. "Who is the woman out there?"

"I have a smart-sized idee, Dicky, that et's her."

"Kate?"

"Ther same."

"Bring her in, bring her in at once!"

"Hambone, yes; but let me say a word first ter sort o' put ye in shape ter see her. She looks as if she had been cavoortin' around with a condensed can o' cantankerous dynamite, and she's out of her mind—"

Dick raised himself again to his elbow, with an effort.

"Alva," he said, using his old-time affectionate term for the old fellow, "bring her in at once, and not another word out of you."

"Yes, yes, Dicky, I'll do it," as he hastened to obey; "but fer ther love o' hambones in general and that one that discombobberated old Joner in p'tic'lar, don't move so much!"

He was out in a moment, and in a moment was back again, leading the woman by the wrist.

The light of the doorway partly blinded Dick, and he could only make out the form of the woman so wretchedly clad, and an exclamation escaped him.

"My God, Kate, is it you?" he asked.

"Save him, oh! save him!" was the woman's response.

"Bring her where the light will fall upon her face, quick!" Dick ordered.

He was greatly excited now, and the old scout was only too eager to obey, to have it over as soon as possible.

Leading the woman to the opposite corner, he faced her around to the light, which there fell full upon her face and revealed her miserable plight only too plainly.

One glance was enough for Dick, and he fell back upon his bunk with a heavy sigh of disappointment.

"Ain't et her?" Avalanche asked.

"No, it isn't Kate!" answered Dick, faintly.

"But I take et you know her, Dicky; who is she?"

"Yes, I know her. Take her out and come back, and I will tell you who she is."

Dick was panting feebly for breath, and in order to save him further effort or excitement then, Old Avalanche hastened out.

"Save him, oh! save him!"

So the woman kept repeating, in low, pleading voice.

"Yes, we'll see about savin' him," said the old scout, as soon as they were some steps away from the cabin. "But, who ar' you, woman?"

"Oh! the storm, the lightning! I am terrified! I shall die, oh! I shall die!"

"Great osserfied hambone that made soup fer Jupiter! yer hev got 'em bad, an' no mistake. Thar ain't no lightnin' now, gal, nor no storm, nuther. What ails ye, anyhow?"

"Save him, oh! save him!"

"Yes, yes, we'll take keer o' him; but, say, don't you remember Deadwood Dick, ther great ragin'—"

Again did the woman start, and again for a single second did the light of reason seem to glow in her wild eyes, but it was gone as quickly.

"Save him, save him!" she moaned.

"All right; all right; we'll see that he gits properly saved, when we find out who he is and whar he is sitocated. You jest stay hyer, gal, till I come out, and we'll go and hunt him up."

The old scout pressed her down upon a rude bench that stood near by, and leaving her sitting there went into the cabin.

"Great etarnel rarified and speculated old hambone!" he exclaimed. "Dicky, that poor soul ar' a fit subject fer bedlam, ef I ever seen one that was. What is goin' ter be done with her?"

"Sit down here, Alva," said Dick, and he indicated a rude chair, the only one the cabin contained.

Old Avalanche drew it up to the side of the bunk and sat down.

"Hyar I am," he said, "and I'm jest dyin' ter know what's at ther bottom o' all this. You know ther woman, and et's plain that she knows you, too."

"Knows me?"

"Yes."

"How do you know she does?"

"Decompositionated hambone! how do we know anything? When I mentioned your name she guv a start, and I could see et in her eyes that she wasn't no stranger to ye."

"That is bad; but, then, you say she is mad."

"No name fer et, Dicky. She's as crazy as two bedbugs and a half, by ther ragin' rantanklers."

"I would not want her to know me, or that I am here, Avalanche. But, there is little danger that she can understand anything, I guess."

"Mighty little, Dicky. But, who is she?"

"Avalanche, that woman is the wife of Red Roy the outlaw!"

"Great currogated an' bioxidized sign o' disruppin' an' turrible demolishun!"

"That is who she is; the Queen of Hearts I was telling you about. It is plain that she was out in that storm, and that she has not seen shelter since. The wonder is that she ever lived through it."

"Great cayoortin' an' globulated relick that went with Joner when they sent him up fer breach o' contract! Dicky, ye hev amazed me in manner untellable. What is ter be done with ther p'izen critter? We don't want her 'round hyer, I'm darned ef we do."

"You are right in saying that; and it would be inhuman to cast her off. She must be half famished, and you must give her something to eat. From what you say, her mind is probably shattered, and perhaps permanently; but her coming this way is a good thing for us, for I believe she can be made useful to us."

"I s'pose you know what you ar' talkin' about, Dicky, but darn me ef I know what ye ar' gettin' at. Et hits me she's a mighty good critter to get rid of as soon as possible—great hambone, yes!"

"I agree with you there, but you do not understand."

"That seems ter be about it."

"When the woman has rested, after you have given her something to eat, you must take her down to the camp—"

"Lor' Jerusha!"

"Hear me out. You must take her down to the camp and there tell how she wandered to your cabin, and not knowing what to do with her you brought her down for somebody to take care of."

"And who do ye think will keer to take charge of a crazy woman?"

"You don't see the point yet, old pard."

"I guess you are right."

"Well, suppose Red Roy is there, in some guise or other—"

"Great curronatered an' demolishified old hambone! Dicky, I am a jackass, pure an' simple, an' that's all I am, too. Now I see what ye ar' comin' at. You think ef ther cuss is thar he will reckernize ther gal, as of course he will, and you want me ter have my old blinkers open ter git onto him."

"That is it, old pard."

"Signs o' demolishun! that will be easy as kin be. But, what ef he ain't thar, and what ef nobody will take ther critter off'n my hands?"

"Oh! you will get clear of her easily enough. There will be somebody who will take her off your hands. There must be some women in the camp, and most of women have a large percentage of charity in their make-up."

So it was decided it should be done, and Avalanche set about providing the woman with something to eat preparatory to setting out.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STRANGER TAKEN IN.

ROYAL FLUSH was jogging along in the even tenor of its way, and everything was serene. This could not always be said of the camp, but it was now the quiet part of the day, about the same hour as that on which the outlaw had made the raid upon the private bank of Mayor MacCraw.

The excitement in your Western camp usually begins with the going down of the sun, and sometimes it is kept up till the sun rises again, though, as a general rule, it "tapers off" at midnight, and the small hours find it in a deep and heavy sleep. Then, in the day, it is during the small hours again that things in general are sleepy and dull.

Mayor MacCraw was in his office, talking with his man Hank Waldon.

The mayor had never got over his loss at the hands of Red Roy, and in his breast he harbored a cherished thought that some day he would have sweet revenge.

In his head he kept tally of the amount, and frequently found himself computing the interest he was losing every day, averaging it by the amount he usually charged upon his large loans. The larger the loan the less the interest, and vice versa.

The big hotel across the way, the Pacific Palace—and MacCraw owned the major part of that, too—was dull and quiet in the glare of the afternoon sun, and the crowd sitting in the shade on the piazza may be described in the same words. The principal saloon, too, nearly opposite the hotel, was lazy and drowsy in like manner. The only sounds of active life were the engines puffing away at the mines.

This saloon, since it has been mentioned, was known as the Rosebud, and was the popular resort of the camp, not even second to the hotel. At the hotel, billiards and pool flourished, but at the saloon there was a veritable gamblers' paradise, and it was presided over by a woman. Here, too, the worthy mayor had a strong financial hold, and the Rosebud was his favorite resort when business hours were done, and very often at other times, too.

It was whispered around that the attraction that drew him there was the pretty proprietress, Fairy Frank—Frank being her name. Be that as it may, we will not pause now to inquire into the facts.

Things were about as described, on this day and at this hour of which we write, when a peculiar-looking couple were descried coming down into the camp from up the gulch.

Some fellow on the hotel piazza saw them first, and he quickly drew attention to them.

"Gee-whiz!" he cried. "What hev we hyer?"

Others looked at once.

"Ther wanderin' Jew and his wife," one man ventured to speculate.

"Why, that's the queer old codger who hangs out up there in the cabin on the cliff," declared one Elegant Jo, a well-dressed sport.

"Darn ef you ain't right, Elegant Jo," agreed the discoverer. "But, who an' what has he got with him? Has ther 'pearance of a woman, but ef et is, she has been seein' hard times, I should say."

"A woman it is, you can tell by her hair."

"And that's about ther only way ye kin tell, fer she is about as near ondressed as decency will allow, hang me ef she ain't."

As the reader rightly guesses, it was Old Avalanche with the crazy woman of the cliff.

She was, as we have already mentioned, barely decently clad. Her skirt was missing from the knees down, one foot and leg was bare, and on the other was only a shoe, while one sleeve was missing entirely and the other hung in tatters.

"Whar kin he hev found her?" questioned the discoverer.

"We'll find out when he gits hyer," another made response.

As for the sport, Elegant Jo, he felt enough interest to get up from his comfortable position to get a better look.

This man was a good-looking young fellow of twenty-eight or so, with cool, keen, steely blue eyes, and was dressed in the best and looked as neat as a pin from crown to heel. Hence his nickname.

He was comparatively a stranger in the camp, having been there only a few weeks, but already he had worked himself into the regard of most of the citizens. He was a jolly fellow, a good companion, and his money was as free as water to his friends, of whom he had plenty.

He was a gambler; made no bones about having it known, and was a singularly fortunate one.

Old Avalanche came on with his *protegee*, comments innumerable being made as he approached, but which need not be quoted.

"Hello, what have you there?" greeted the proprietor of the hotel, one Davis Stumplift.

"Great ramificated an' paralyzin' old hambone!" the old scout cried in response. "You tell me an' I'll tell you, pardner. Hyer ye see her, jest as she was disklivered."

Elegant Joe was looking on, biting his mustache in an apparently abstracted manner.

"Where did you find her, old man?" he asked.

"Why, she kem wanderin' up ther trail to my cabin," was explained, "and not havin' any use fer any woman in my 'stablishment, I thort I'd bring her right on down hyer, and turn her loose. I hev had all ther marry I ever hanker arter— But, then, ye kin see that she is crazy."

"Save him, oh! save him!" the poor creature piteously appealed.

"Gee-whiz!" cried the original discoverer of the pair, "I should say she is crazy!"

"Does any one know who she is?" inquired the sport.

He looked around over the crowd as he put the question, but no one seemed to identify her.

The crowd had pressed to the front, now, and men were coming from every direction, eager to learn what was going on. The quickest thing in the world to draw is an idle crowd.

The woman was uttering her piteous moanings continuously.

"Don't know her, eh?" said the sport. "Then she's your property, I guess, old man, by right of discovery."

"Great rustycatin' an' transmogrificatin' old hambone, no!" the old scout cried. "I don't want her, cityzens, don't want her a' tall! I have had all ther dealin's wi' shemale critters that I ever want ter have. I wouldn't marry one of 'em ef she was lined wi' gold, an' set wi' prashus stones—great devastatin' an' hustlin' signs o' rantankerous demolishun, no!"

Most of the crowd laughed at his earnestness.

"Then what ar' ye goin' ter do wi' her?" asked one man.

"Turn her loose ter browse on cold charity, ef nobody claims her," was the brief response.

"Better hold fast to her," one fellow suggested.

"She may come all right in ther head after awhile, and you'll have a prize. She's a darn fine looker."

"Not any, not any," declared the old scout, shaking his head. "Ef et hadn't been fer wimmin kind I'd be a far younger an' better-lookin' man than what ye see me now. Thar was that first rantankler I hooked up with—*Whew!* My head is full o' dents whar she laid me out wi' a poker more times'n I kin tell, and at last she wound up by chawin' off my 'years, when—"

"Forty-one!" some one in the crowd called out.

And that raised a laugh at once, meaningless as it seemed from a mirth-provoking standpoint.

It had reference, however, to the number of times the old scout had related different explanations bearing upon the loss of his auricular members.

"But, cityzens an' feller galoots," the old man branched off promptly, "I appeal ter you ter know what's ter be done wi' this hyer beauty in distress. She may be a lady born an' bred, fer all I know, an' et's a pty ter have her goin' around in this hyer fashion. I couldn't do nothin' fer her up thar on ther ledge; hambone, no! so I brung her right down hyer. What ar' ye goin' ter do about et? Great rip-ragin' an' tempestuous blizzards! ye won't see her want fer shelter an' grub, will ye? Ef ye do, by ther circumnambulin' an' disintergenerated hambone what stayed ther stummick of old Joner ye ar' a was lot o' p'izen pirates'n what I took ye to be! Whar is ther ma'r o' this hyer camp anyhow?"

The mayor was coming, together with his constabulary and police force in the person of Hank Waldon.

They had been made aware by the loud laughter that something out of the usual was going on.

"There is more truth than poetry in this old man's words," spoke up Elegant Jo. "This woman ought to be cared for, citizens."

"An' who has said she sha'n't be?" demanded

one man. "This hyer camp never went back on wimmin yet, Elegant Jo, an' I guess we won't begin now."

"Glad to hear it. I for one am willing to go down in my pocket to bear the expense."

"Yas, and so am I, too."

"And hyer, too!"

"Me, too!"

A dozen offers were quickly made.

"What's the matter here," asked the mayor, now on the spot. "Who is this wretched-lookin' woman?"

"Shall I run her in, boss?" asked the constabulary and police force.

Waldon was eager to "run in" something or somebody, for, wonderful to say, his jail just then happened to be empty, a state of affairs which he considered greatly to his discredit.

"No; wait till we find out about her," was the answer. "Who is she, old man?" to the scout.

"Your conundrum is a trifle too hefty," Old Avalanche made reply. "I don't know. All I do know is that she drifted up to my roost thar on ther cliff an' seemed sort o' crazy, jest as ye see her now, an' I hev brought her down hyer to be taken keer of. By ther rampagin' hambone—"

"Never mind the hambone just now," the mayor interrupted. "Does anybody know who this woman is?"

"I had asked that question just before you appeared," spoke up Elegant Jo. "No one recognizes her."

"Then she is a stranger."

"Seems to be."

"What is your name, woman?" addressing the unfortunate herself.

"Save him, oh! save him, save him!" she wailed.

"Crazy as can be," the mayor agreed. "That woman has been through some terrible experience, boys, as her appearance proves. She must be taken care of—"

"Shall I run her in—"

So the handy-man interrupted, stepping forward.

"Blast ye, no!" roared the mayor. "This is a case that 'peals to our sympathies. She must be taken care of properly, and given a chance to recover. What have you to say about et, old man?"

This to Avalanche.

"Currogated hambone o' demolishun with which Joner slewed the Fillysteens!" the old scout cried. "Et makes me blud b'ile ter hear that 'ar feller talk about runnin' ther poor critter inter ther kerboose. Ma'r, my private 'vice ter you is, ter be keerful how ye 'low that chap ter manage yer jail. But, to ther question at p'int: I hev nothin' ter offer, 'cept ther woman herself. I don't want her, but I think ther same as you do that she orter be keered for in ther right way; hambone, yes!"

"I had just proposed," said the gambler sport, "taking up a collection to bear the expense, and my idea was to get her located with some good family here at the camp where one of her own sex can look after her and take care of her. I'm willing to chip in a hundred towards it."

He backed up his words promptly with a sight of the money.

"That is boss sense, every time," the mayor agreed. "That is what we'll do, if some one can be found to take her."

"Some one must take her," cried the sport, with some earnestness.

"Bob Jeffert's is jest ther place fer her."

"That's so; take her thar."

This seemed to be agreed upon promptly, and the crowd set off immediately in the direction of that gentleman's cabin; the mayor and the police force ahead, Old Avalanche and his charge next, and the others with them.

Mrs. Jeffert, a kindly-faced woman of middle age, met the crowd at the door, and when the situation had been explained to her she took the poor waif in, agreeing to keep her and care for her for a certain stipulated sum per week in the way of board. And so, for the time being, the matter was settled; and Old Avalanche presently made his way out of the camp in the direction he had come.

CHAPTER VII.

RED ROY'S SECOND RAID.

WHEN Old Avalanche returned to the cabin on the cliff, he found Deadwood Dick in a deep sleep.

His coming in did not awaken him, and he moved about carefully in order not to disturb him and cheat him of any part of the "sweet restorer" that was better than medicine.

The old scout went about his household occu-

pations very quietly, preparing something for Dick to eat when he should wake up, and making ready to dress his wounds, which he had done once or twice daily. But for him, Dick would probably have been numbered with the majority.

When Dick opened his eyes it was nearly night, and the old scout himself was asleep on the one chair of the cabin, his back braced in the corner of the room, and he was snoring beautifully.

"Avalanche?" Dick spoke.

The old fellow awoke instantly, and was upon his feet.

"Great delusionated hambone!" he exclaimed. "Is et pesky Injuns around? I thort I heerd 'em."

"I am the only Injun you have got to trouble you just now," said Dick. "I am choking for a drink of water, old pard."

"Sanctivated signs o' demoralizin' demolishun! I guess I was dreamin' when I woke up, Dicky, fer I thort I smelt Injun jest as plain as I ever did in my life. A drink? Ye shell swim in et, ef we want to!"

A cooling draught of sparkling water was given, after which Dick made inquiry about the trip down to camp with the crazy woman.

"I left her thar," declared the old scout; "hambone, yes!"

"But, did any one recognize her?" urged Dick.

"That's a open question, Dicky. Darn me ef I know whether anybody did or not. But, you let me give ye some grub and do up yer hurts, and then we'll talk about et."

Dick did not feel like urging the matter, and as haste was nothing to him then, he patiently waited.

Finally everything had been done, and in the gathering darkness the old scout sat down beside the bunk and prepared to unbosom.

"As I told ye," said he, "it's a open question whether anybody knowed ther gal or not. And et's a question that I ain't able ter settle in me own mind. Great discombobberated hambone, no!"

"Well, what is it that raises the doubt in your mind?"

"Ther hull proceedin' from beginnin' ter end. Et's a case o' for an' 'ginst, and not a great sight o' evvydence either way."

"Give me the details of it."

"I reckon I'll have ter, Dick, and let you bend your brains to et."

So the old scout gave a detailed report of all that had taken place during his visit to the camp, omitting nothing that had come under his observation.

"And this Elegant Jo, what manner of man is he?" asked Dick.

"He's a good-looker, Dicky, and as spick and span as a new gilt button. He has a pair of mighty searchin' eyes, a purty mustache, an' a square-set jaw, wi' a sort o' lady's dimple in ther chin."

"Avalanche, you are a close observer, and ten to one that is the man. What do you know about him?"

"He ain't been many moons at ther camp, but he's got a stack o' friends thar, an' they do tell that he's a ragin' juggernaut o' demolishun in a scrimmage."

"And yet you couldn't detect that he recognized the woman, eh?"

"Nary a detect."

"And she did not recognize him?"

"Nary."

"Well, he is a shrewd fellow, and might fool you; but it seems strange she would not know him at sight."

"Great exterpatin' hambone what guzzled Joner's diarframml ain't et jest as I told ye? Ther more ye think on et ther less ye will know. Et's a sticker; signs o' scrimmagazation, yes!"

"Well, it is our business to pay some attention to this Elegant Jo, as soon as I am able to attend to business at all. You must keep posted, Alva, on everything that takes place at the camp, and I'll do all I can to hasten my recovery; and that means strict obedience to you."

A month dragged by, a month of dark days indeed for Deadwood Dick.

No one had been to the cabin, and his presence there was unknown and unsuspected. Old Avalanche had guarded well his secret.

He was now able to be up and around, and strong enough to take considerable of exercise. His wounds were all healed, and his strength was returning rapidly. Richard would soon be himself again.

Meanwhile the camp in the gulch had drifted

along in its prosperous way, and it was growing in population and importance daily.

Nothing further had been heard from Red Roy, and it was believed that the mayor's offer of reward, with the eternal vigilance of the constabulary and police force, had frightened him off for good.

Hank Waldon went about with no less than four revolvers exposed to sight in his belt, and had more than once expressed the wish that he might be permitted to get a bead on the outlaw. But, thus far, his desire had not been gratified, and appearances went to indicate that it never would be.

The crazy woman, "Crazy Sal," as she had come to be called, was still at the home of Bob Jeffert, where Bob's wife took the best of care of her. She was occasionally seen down by the creek at the lower side of the gulch, where she would remain for an hour at a time gazing into the water and pleadingly demanding its surrender of her dead.

No one had yet recognized her, and so long a time had passed that her presence was forgotten, save when she was seen.

One morning a stranger appeared in the camp.

He was a man of medium height, with dark, magnetic eyes, and with hair rather long and a full, dark-brown beard.

He was very pale, and it could be seen at a glance that he was not very robust, unless appearances were deceptive. Where he came from no one knew, and the first that was seen of him was when he entered the big hotel.

Clad in rough yet serviceable clothes, he did not appear a man of wealth by any means.

Inquiring for the proprietor of the house, Davis Stumplift made himself known as such, and the stranger asked concerning board and lodging.

These things were right in Stumplift's line, and he could accommodate him.

So, the register was shoved out and the stranger booked himself.

The name he registered was—"John Banty, of Virginia City."

In some passing conversation with the landlord, after registering, he let out that he was a consumptive seeking health in a change of air. He had been tramping by easy stages, and believed that he was improving.

This was accepted, and it explained how he had come into the camp at other than stage hours.

To the reader it need not be said that this man was Deadwood Dick.

His clothes, bought there at Royal Flush by Old Avalanche, a piece at a time, were a perfect disguise, taken together with his paleness and his full beard.

It was on the morning following the day of his arrival that the camp was thrown into a state of great excitement.

It came about in this wise:

Mayor MacCraw, opening his office for the business of the day, made the discovery that his safe had been robbed during the night, though he found it locked and in perfect order. And there, where his hoarded dollars had reposed, was a card bearing this inscription:—

"The compliments of

"RED ROY."

The mayor howled a great howl, and called for his constabulary and police force forthwith. Waldon was not far off, and came running to the spot with all haste.

"What's ther matter, boss?" he inquired.

"Matter enough!" stormed the mayor. "Look at that safe, will you; skinned as clean as a picked bone!"

"Thunder!" ejaculated the handy-man. "Who done et?"

"Who done et! Who d'ye s'pose, but that infernal thief of the world, Red Roy!"

Waldon looked to the revolvers in his belt at once, while he observed:

"I'll go right up and turn that drunk-and-disorderly case out of the jail, and make et ready for more important game."

"You ar' a darn fool!" roared the mayor. "How d'ye think you are goin' ter get hold of the outlaw, when we don't know where he is, and wouldn't know him if we saw him?"

"Well, ye needn't jump on me, anyhow," complained the police force, etc. "I am goin' ter do ther best I kin, and that's all anybody kin do. You jest let me git a squint at that cuss over ther top o' one o' these hyer guns, and see if somethin' won't drop in Royal Flush."

The mayor raved around the office like a wild man for a few minutes, and after that he went

out and made public what had happened; and so, as said, the camp was thrown into a state of great excitement.

"What ar' ye goin' ter do about et, mayor?" one man asked.

At that the mayor fairly exploded.

It put forth in words the thought that had been gnawing at his mind ever since the first robbery.

"What am I going to do about it?" he bellowed. "I'll show ye what I'm going to do about it. You just wait and see, and then you'll know."

The trouble was, the mayor didn't know what to do about it.

In fact, it looked as though he could not do anything.

"I'll tell you what would be a good plan, and it might prove of some use," spoke up Elegant Jo.

"What is it?" the mayor demanded.

"Why, appoint a guard to stand watch over every trail that leads to and from the camp, and make every man give an account of himself before he enters here."

"That's just what I'll do!" cried MacCraw. "I'll press the whole camp into service, if it's necessary. I'm going to wind this thing up, or know the reason why. We have had enough of it."

"You have, at any rate, eh?"

"I should say so!"

"There will be this advantage about it," the sport further explained. "It will prevent any outsider from coming in without your knowledge, or the knowledge of your men, anyhow, and will in that way hinder another tapping of your safe."

"I'll do it; by the sinews of war, I will!"

"And then pay attention to every stranger who appears here," was the further suggestion.

"I'll do it; I'll have a watchman at the office after this, too. By the way, does anybody know of any stranger who arrived here yesterday? Any fellow who can't give a straight account of himself?"

This took place in the street in front of the hotel.

On the piazza of the hotel sat Deadwood Dick, a quiet observer of all that was being said.

"Richard," said he to himself, upon hearing this question put, "here is a chance for you to get into a scrape, and a good big one, too."

Barely had his mind given birth to the thought, when attention was drawn to him by some fellow in the crowd.

"Thar's that consumptive galoot at the hotel," the man shouted; "he's new around hyer."

The mayor looked, and strode to the piazza at once.

"You are a stranger here, I believe," he snarled.

"Yes, I came here yesterday," answered Dick.

"Well, are you aware what's happened?"

"I have heard all that has been said," was the quiet rejoinder.

"That being the case, are you prepared to prove who you are, and that you are not the robber?"

Dick laughed in a quiet way.

"Well, mayor," he said, "I am not going to try very hard to prove it. You see me for just what I am, a half-invalid, and if you have got proof that I'm anything else, bring it forth. I don't think you can make a case against me, however."

"Shall I run him in?" asked the constabulary and police force.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER OLD PARD COMES TO LIGHT.

"GREAT hambone what ruptured ther larynx an' ripped up ther diarframm o' old Joner!" another voice suddenly cried out, a voice that had come to be well known there at the camp, and the old man of the cliff was seen pushing his way to the front. "Great currogated an' pestiferous signs o' meanderin' demolishun!"

"Well, what's the matter with you, old man?" demanded the mayor.

"Why, great hambone o' harmonious hunkadori! I took you men o' this hyer camp o' Royal Flush ter be men o' hard boss sense, ter say nothin' of bein' fair and squar' in everything. Yet, hyer I find ye p'intin' s'pishun at a feller what looks as ef he hadt' more'n a month o' life left in him at most. It makes me blud b'il, et does; old ancient an' fossilized hambone, yes!"

"Do you know what has happened here, Old Withered?" cried the mayor. "Do ye know that my bank has been robbed again?"

"So I hev heard ye proclaimin' from ther housetops, as et wur; but that ain't ter say this man done et, is et? Might as well 'cuse me of et, or any other man in the camp."

"But, this fellow is a stranger."

"Never mind me, old man," spoke up Dick, in his light and easy way. "Let them make what they can out of it. I know they can't prove anything against me, so do not interfere with their little fun."

"That's all right, and mebbly I wouldn't, ef you was a well man; but that face o' yours 'pears ter me ter have ther stamp o' death on et even now, an' I couldn't keep still ef I wanted to; hambone, no!"

"Shall I run him in?" Waldon repeated his question.

"Run who in?" cried Old Avalanche, turning upon him suddenly and fiercely. "Run me in? Great cantankerous old hambone with which Joner macadamized ther trail from Babylon to ther sea! you jest try et on, and ef thar won't be one of ther wu'st old screamin' an' screechin' blizzards hyer ye ever heard of! I don't keer ef ye hev got four an' forty weepins, ye—"

Waldon had drawn back, as if in doubt whether to take water or shoot the old man on the spot.

"Never mind," broke in the mayor. "There ain't any proof, as the fellow declares, and I couldn't do anything with him without that. We'll let et rest; but, you are a stranger, young man, so be careful how you conduct yourself. I am going now to organize a regular police force for this camp."

"Don't waste any time over me," said Dick, still as quietly and as calmly as ever. "When you want me you will probably find me right here, during my stay in your camp. I'm not much given to active life at present."

"Then ye don't want him run in?" said Waldon yet again.

"No; confound it, what's the use? He is no doubt innocent, and we would not be able to prove it if he wasn't."

"That's about the right view of it," agreed the sport. "If you arrest one you would have to arrest every man in camp and serve all alike, and that would be something of a job."

"Yes; you're right. Come on to my office, and we'll talk this thing over."

So, the mayor strutted back to his den, Elegant Jo with him, and the constabulary and police force bringing up the rear as a sort of armed escort.

"Ye don't want ter let these fire-eaters skar ye, Mister Man," said Old Avalanche to Dick. "I don't opine they really mean ye harm, but fer a weakly cuss like you it's bad fer ther diarframm, so ter say."

Dick smiled.

"I am not afraid of their harming me," he declared. "A man can't die but once anyhow, and if they should take a notion to string me up it would only be putting me out of my misery, perhaps."

Even as he spoke, he made a secret sign to the old scout, a sign that made the old fellow to know that their suspicion had been correct.

It was late in the day when the afternoon stage came rolling into the camp, and as it pulled up in front of the hotel the Jehu sung out:

"Hyar we be, at last, what's left of us! We hev had jest a hurricane of a time this hyer trip, an' ther mail an' Express ar' gone slick and clean!"

Here was excitement anew.

"What's up?" demanded the mayor.

"Trumps was up, mayor," the driver answered, "and them same trumps was a pair of poppers in ther fists o' Red Roy ther outlaw!"

"Red Roy again!"

"Red Roy!" from every man in the crowd, almost.

"Ther same, by ther gods o' war! He was in red from hat to boots, jest as he was said ter be over at ther Butte, and he held us up jest beautifullee."

The passengers were alighting, and among them was a young man, or youth, of good build and with a pleasing face and a pair of keen eyes. He looked around him as if in search of some one.

Deadwood Dick, seated on the piazza of the hotel, saw him, and gave a start of recognition.

Following the youth came a woman, richly dressed, and wearing a veil of some thin, but shimmering stuff, that defied penetration.

Dick looked to note whether she and the youth were companions further than by chance, and immediately decided that they were not. The woman, after one hasty look around, went immediately into the hotel.

The youth continued to scan the crowd, and a look of disappointment appeared on his face.

Dick smiled as he noted it.

The crowd was paying little or no attention to the passengers, the excitement of the moment being too great for them to think of anything but the daring robbery that had taken place.

There were other passengers, but with them we have nothing to do.

"Where did this hold-up take place?" inquired the mayor. "How far back on the trail was it?"

"Et was back thar at Ghost-walk Gulch, not more'n half an hour ago. We kem on a-b'ilin' as soon as he let us start, you kin bet."

"And didn't you try ter ride him down?" asked one man.

"Nary," was the grim response. "I am a man o' fambly, an' I didn't banker after a ticket o' departure jest yet. I held up ter oncet an' saved trouble. He said I was a sensible critter, an' I guess I was."

"And you allowed him to take the mail without a word of protest!"

"I was as meek as a lamb, mayor."

"A coward, rather."

"Have it jest as ye want to, but ef you had been in my boots I reckon you would have been jest as brave as I was."

"Great currogated an' dispensashunated old hambone what we read about in ther 'steenth chapter o' Eccleesysticuss!" cried Old Avalanche. "Whar is ther feller now what throwed surspishun upon that sick man?"

"He'll have ter take water," chipped in some one.

"Great ragin' torrents o' devastatin' demolishun! I should say he would! Et ain't no funeral o' mine, but I kin troothfully asseverate o' my own personal an' identical knowledge that ther sick cuss ain't been off'n that peeazzer fer ther last hour or more. Hence, ther fact is plain that he can't be Red Roy; hambone, no! Now I am as much interested in this hyer outlaw-hunt as ther next one, fer I looked fer a letter by this hyer mail, an' ef any one will start ther game, I'll be in on ther run, you kin bet; but I don't want ter run on no false scents."

"That's what's ther matter." Several agreed promptly to that.

"An' that's all I hev got ter say," the old scout wound up.

"Which is quite enough," remarked the mayor. "Waldon, I want you to select forty good men, and have 'em report at my office at oncet."

The constabulary and police force swelled up with importance.

"I'll do it," he declared, "an' I'll have 'em thar in twenty minutes. I'll pick ther best men of ther camp, and ther man what refuses gits run in, that's all. I act 'cordin' to ther power vested in me, an' by ther mayor's orders, as ye hev all heard et spoken."

This was, of course, only a tithe of what was said and done.

The excitement was running high, and almost every man in the crowd was talking; each one had some suggestion to offer.

Having told his story, the stage-driver led his jaded animals and the time-worn "bearse" around to the rear of the hotel, and the crowd broke up into knots to discuss the latest event.

At the same time the police force, etc., was hustling around making his selections for the public service, and as fast as he picked them out they repaired to the mayor's office to be sworn in, and duly vested with authority for the duty they were about to assume.

Meanwhile the youth who had come by the stage had gone up to the piazza of the hotel, where he stood leaning against one of the posts, and watching the crowd in a rather disheartened manner.

Dick still had his eyes upon him in an amused way.

"I guess I'll speak to him before he begins to make inquiries," he said to himself. "He looks as forlorn as a funeral."

He made a shuffling sound with his feet to draw the young fellow's attention his way, and when he looked, motioned him to approach.

"Were you motioning to me?" the lad asked.

We have called him "youth" and "lad," though he was probably twenty years of age, at least. His face, however, was still quite youthful.

"I was," answered Dick. "Sit down here a minute, I want to talk with you."

The young man eyed Dick sharply, as if he thought he ought to know him, but apparently gave it up, and pulling up a chair took a seat.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"Were you robbed, along with the rest?"
"I was; cleaned out as clean as a clock. I'm strapped."

"I thought so, by the way you looked when you came up on the piazza."

"And I'm in a bad fix. Here I am, without a dollar, and without a friend, strapped completely."

"You looked around as though you expected to find some one you knew."

"Yes; but I guess it's going to be a dark look. He isn't here, or at any rate he isn't in sight."

"What's his name?"

"Well, I guess I won't let out his name to a stranger; he may have reason for keeping it still, and I won't spoil that for him. I'll hustle to strike a job of work, and keep my eye peeled."

"Billy Bucket, is it possible that you don't know me? Mum now; not too loud."

The fellow's eyes flew open wide, and he looked again at Dick.

"Is it possible?" he said. "Why, I looked close at ye, but gave it up as a bad job. Give me yer hand! But, Dick, are you dyin' or what is the matter? You look like a chronic consumptive."

They shook hands, and Dick responded:

"No, I'm not dying just yet, Billy. I have been pretty close to it, from wounds I got in a fight, but I'm on the mend now. What brings you here? I thought you were in New York."

"So I was, but I left. I got tired of it, and have had enough of it till I get homesick, if I ever do. I haven't a relation on earth, so far as I know, and in summing up my list o' friends, I found I could count 'em all on one thumb, and that one was you; so I set out to find ye, and here I am."

"And you want to join me again?"

"Yes, if you want me, or will take me, rather; that is, if you haven't some other pard."

Dick's pale face grew sad at once.

"I had a pard," he said, sorrowfully, "the dearest pard of my whole life, Billy, but she is dead. I am more than glad to welcome you back to your old place. But, how about the drink?"

"That is a thing of the past, Dick. I have not touched a drop since I saw you last, and, God helping me, I will never touch another drop as long as I live."

This was earnestly said.

"I am glad of that, my boy. I made the same vow myself a considerable time ago, when I found I was getting to like it too well. A man cannot be a man with whisky inside, Billy, and a boy who drinks will never be a man at all; that is, a manly man."

"I believe it. But, that pard of yours: who was et?"

"It was my wife, Billy; the best, the bravest, and the truest wife a man ever had. Poor Kate!"

"There, I didn't mean to hurt your feelin's, Dick. But, what do you want me to call you? I take it that you are not known here, from your tellin' me to speak low and not give you away."

"You hit it right, Billy. I am known here as John Banty, and I'm supposed to be from Virginia City. You will have to claim to be from the same place, since men have seen us talking together. I'll tell you what the lay is, if you want to take part in it."

CHAPTER IX.

ENTIRELY UNEXPECTED.

MANY readers will remember Billy Bucket. Deadwood Dick first made his acquaintance when the lad was a street Arab in New York.

Dick there picked him up, gave him some minor parts to play in some of his cases, and for a time they had got along famously together.

Finally the boy accompanied Dick West, where he worked with him, but tiring of it, deserted and returned to New York, where, some months later, Dick found him once more, but this time in a fair way of becoming a drunkard.

Dick befriended him, straightened him up, and made him promise to leave the drink alone. They had some further adventures together, after that, and finally parted in New York. Dick had not heard of him since, and was glad to know that the pledge had been kept.

They had a long talk together.

Dick told Billy all about his recent campaign, and in turn learned all about Billy's movements since they had last met.

"And you say the road-agent cleaned you out?" Dick asked.

"Every cent I had, and I had about four

hundred dollars with me, enough to see me a long ways."

"It's too bad; but, we'll get it back again. The campaign is going to be wound up this round. Here, take this, and make yourself comfortable at the hotel here with it."

He gave the lad some money as he spoke, and together they entered the bar-room, where Billy registered.

He set down his true name, but gave his address as Virginia City, the same as Dick's.

They sat down in the bar-room to continue their talk, and while there the cry of fire! was heard without.

The shout was quickly taken up, everybody rushed for the street, and when Dick and Billy got out they saw everybody looking up toward the cliff where the cabin of Old Avalanche stood.

The old scout's cabin was wrapped in flames! A word of explanation just here: This had been done purposely by the old man, in order that he might have a good excuse for remaining in the camp to be near his *protege*.

"Thar goes yer cabin, old liar," some fellow called out.

Avalanche was just coming out from one of the saloons, and turning his gaze where everybody else was looking, he cried:

"Great percuss-shunated an' refringerifated old hambone! What am I going ter do now? Ragin' an' roarin' signs o' devourin' demolishun! my house an' home is gone up in smoke!"

"Better run and try to put it out," suggested one.

"Et ain't no use," was the return. "Et would be down afore I could git half-way there. Well, let 'er go; et was only a squatter title I held, anyhow."

"Have any valuables there, old man?"

"Great reconsistercated hambone, no! Ther most vallyable things I got ar' the duds I wear, p'tic'larly this hyer old bat," taking the old rag from his head and rubbing it fondly with his sleeve. "This hyar bat war old afore a good many of ye wur born, an' I wouldn't part with et nohow. Notiss ther bullet holes in et? Wull, I got one of 'em thar the day Wild Bill got picked off in Deadwood. No; let ther old cabin go ef et wants to; I guess I kin find wherewith ter lay my head somewhar hyer in camp."

The old bat was nothing better than a rag, the remains of what had once been a hat.

Deadwood Dick had taken advantage of the excitement to give the old man a sign regarding Billy Bucket, and after awhile Billy met the old man and made his acquaintance.

In the mean time the mayor had been hard at work organizing his police force, or Vigilance Committee, and it was now about completed.

Hank Waldon was at the head, so puffed up with importance that there was danger that his vest buttons would not stand the strain. There were forty men in all, and each one was armed with a rifle or gun.

The chief drew his command up in front of the mayor's office, and MacCraw addressed them.

He reminded them that eternal vigilance was the price of liberty; that only cowards refused to stake their lives, their liberty and their sacred honor; and a good deal more in that Fourth-of-July strain; and wound up by telling them they were to take Red Roy at any hazard, either dead or alive.

All of these men were in the mayor's employ, and a good many of them in his debt. The chief of police—let us give him his title!—had chosen wisely and well.

They were divided into four squads, with a captain for each, and their duties defined. Three squads were to guard the three passes that led to and from the camp, while the other was to do patrol duty in the camp proper.

This, it was believed, was a step in the right direction, and that it would balk any further visitations on the part of Red Roy.

With the coming of night the camp awoke to its usual state of activity.

Deadwood Dick had asked Billy Bucket concerning the woman who had been his fellow passenger in the stage, but Billy knew nothing about her, further than that she was French.

Dick had delayed going in to supper with the hope of meeting her at table, but in that he was mistaken. She had come in earlier than any one else, and had already gone out.

Not that he cared much who she was, but the fact that she had come veiled naturally aroused his curiosity, and it was aroused the more when he was told that she had eat her supper with the veil still on. There must be a reason for it, he told himself.

He spoke to Stumplift about her.

"A darn fine gal," was that worthy's declaration, "but a mighty mysterious one. Wears that 'ar veil all ther time. She is bu'sted—got cleaned out entirely by Red Roy, and I have had to grub-stake her till she can write fer a boodle."

"What's her name?" asked Dick.

"Thar et is; read et fer yerself."

He shoved out the register.

Dick looked, and learned her name. It was—

"Madalene Rousseau, France."

There was, perhaps, good reason why the landlord had told him to read for himself; he possibly could not undertake to pronounce the name.

"That's sure-enough French," remarked Dick, reading the name aloud. "I wonder what can have brought a Frenchwoman here?"

"Ye ask me too much."

"She talks English, of course."

"Oh! yes; but with a little touch o' somethin' furren in it."

"Naturally. A Frenchwoman in a Western camp is a curiosity. No doubt the sports of the place will be eager to make her acquaintance."

"One of them has been asking about her already."

"So?"

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"Elegant Jo."

"Well, he is a likely fellow, and looks like a lady's man. By the way, where is he? I have not seen him around since early this afternoon."

"Oh! he will turn up when the Rosebud opens, never fear."

"He is an *habitué*, eh?"

"A what?"

"I mean, he's a frequenter there."

"He is there every night, and pretty often takes a hand in the game. Buys the bank once in awhile, an' jest makes things hum."

"Guess I'll have to drop in to-night, and see the place. It has a woman proprietor, I hear."

"Yes; Fairy Frank. You don't want ter get soft on her, though, fer Mayor MacCraw has his eyes bent that way, and it's between him an' Elegant Jo, I take et."

"So, that's the way the wind blows, is it? Well, they have no need to fear a rival in me; I'm casting about for a coffin, and a convenient place to be buried, rather than for a flirtation."

This was said in a grim, jesting way.

When the Rosebud was ablaze with light, later on, and the music struck up, Deadwood Dick and Billy Bucket went over and entered.

It was the usual scene in your camp where a live boom is in progress.

There was first, and to the multitude most important of all, the bar; and beyond was a cleared space for dancing.

A rather tinny piano and a horn made the music of the occasion, and several couples were going through the whirls and twirls of a lively waltz to the tune of some popular air.

Beyond the dancing floor was a partition with a green door, the door in itself being sign enough for what lay beyond.

Dick and Billy edged slowly around the room, taking in everything that was to be seen, and presently found themselves at the green door, and pushing it open, entered the apartment devoted to gaming.

The game had not yet opened, but a great number of men were present, and a number of women, too.

Among others were Mayor MacCraw and Elegant Jo.

The latter was looking his best, in his silk hat, spotless shirt and flashing diamonds.

Fairy Frank had not yet appeared, it lacking a little of her regular time for opening her game, but she was expected in a few minutes.

Presently a step was heard at a rear door, and some one exclaimed:

"That's her!"

The door did not seem to open readily, but presently it turned, and into the room came—not Fairy Frank, but "Crazy Sal!"

A laugh greeted her appearance.

She was very plainly clad in cheap clothes that had been made by Mrs. Jeffert, and looked strangely out of place here.

Deadwood Dick gave Billy a nudge, and they drew back a little out of her direct line of vision. Dick feared recognition, for he was not in condition to defend himself.

Elegant Jo, too, drew back a little, and placed himself in a friendly shadow behind some others. Dick noted this, as did also Old Avalanche.

The faro table had been made ready for the game by an employee of the saloon, and walking straight to the place usually occupied

by Fairy Frank, the crazy woman took her seat and announced:

"This game is now open. Make your play, gentlemen."

CHAPTER X.

ELEGANT JO'S CONQUEST.

SOME of the crowd laughed, others did not. To some it was a decidedly ludicrous sight; to others it was a revelation. It proved something of this unknown woman's past life.

"Make your play, gentlemen," she repeated, preparing to deal the cards from the box.

Some drew away from the board, but others crowded nearer, eager to see what the outcome of so strange a situation would be.

"What is ther limit of this hyer bank?" one fellow asked.

"You make your own limit," was the answer.

Again there was laughter.

"Shall we give her a try?" asked one fellow.

"Why, yes, let's see what she kin do, anyhow. Hyar's a cart-wheel on ther ace, fer a starter."

As he spoke, the fellow put down a silver dollar.

There was no other bet, and the crazy woman dealt the cards. The dollar went to her.

"Ha! ha!" one fellow laughed. "Thar goes yer dollar, Ike. Bully fer ther gal. She's got somethin' ter start on, anyhow."

"Make your play, gentlemen."

The woman had the manner of a veteran of the green table.

"That woman has been thar before," declared the mayor of the camp, addressing his remark to Elegant Jo.

"I believe you are right," was the sport's response.

He spoke in a slightly changed tone, as Deadwood Dick was quick to note.

Several others now made bets, and the cards being dealt the dealer took the greater amount of them all.

While this was going on, Fairy Frank came in.

She stopped short with a start of surprise on seeing her place usurped by such a person as Crazy Sal.

"What is the meaning of this?" she asked, with a smile.

"It means that you are barred out, Fairy Frank," responded the mayor, stepping forward.

"So it seems. This proves what Crazy Sal has been in the past, anyhow. She is no novice at this business."

"That is plain enough."

"And it ought to give the means of learning who she really is."

"Perhaps we shall be able to find out," said Elegant Jo. "The poor creature may be returning to her reason again."

"I believe it is a sign that she is. If no one has any objection, I will let her manage the game till she tires of it. I will back her. Make your play, gentlemen."

"Make your play, gentlemen," said the crazy woman.

Fairy Frank took her place beside Crazy Sal, to act as recouper, and the game went on.

The play commenced in earnest, now, and it soon became apparent that luck was strongly with the bank. Crazy Sal seemed to be a profitable dealer.

"You had better engage her permanently, Fairy Frank," suggested the mayor, who was hovering near the gambler queen.

Elegant Jo was less attentive than usual.

"Perhaps if I did, and the luck continued to run my way too strongly, I should lose custom," was the smiling response.

Deadwood Dick, Old Avalanche and Billy Bucket stood looking on.

They were sure of their game, now, but the time was not ripe for them to show their hand.

Before they could do so, it was necessary to have witnesses ready to prove the charge they made, and these witnesses had been sent for.

The game was running along as usual, when suddenly Crazy Sal dropped her cards and pressed her hands to her head.

The wild look had returned to her eyes, and getting up she moved away from the table with staggering steps, crying:

"Save him, oh! save him! Oh! Harry, Harry! Save him!"

"Got 'em again," cried one fellow.

"Bad," said another. "This settles et fer this time."

It was at that moment that Bob Jeffert entered, in quest of the missing woman. Not that he expected to find her there, but he was

inquiring everywhere. And on finding her, he conducted her away at once.

"What a pity it is," observed Fairy Frank, "that she should be mad. She must have had some great trouble in the past."

"It looks that way," agreed Elegant Jo, taking a place at the table. "And now Fairy Frank, that you are going to take the game in hand yourself, I will play. I had no heart to play against Crazy Sal."

"Hope to beat Fairy Frank, do ye?" remarked Mayor MacCraw. "Well, I'll play to your opposite, anyhow, and so give the lady the chance to come out even, if luck don't go against her entirely."

"That is very chivalric of you, mayor."

"I mean et, too."

The game had barely begun again when another woman entered the room.

This time it was the stranger who had arrived by the stage, the Frenchwoman, Madalene Rousseau.

She was handsomely attired in a rich gown, a light coat over her shoulders, and the one arm that was in sight was bare save for its long French kid glove.

Her appearance made quite a stir in the room, and the more so since she still had on her mask-like veil so that her features were not to be seen. She moved with the air of a queen.

When she spoke, it was with a charming French accent.

"Gentlemen," she said, "may I a favor require of you? Would some one do me so much happiness, *de bonne grace*?"

Elegant Jo was upon his feet instantly, hat in hand, with the politest of bows.

"You have only to speak your lightest wish, fair madame," he said.

"Thank you, saire; oh! thank you. You know I hafe been robbed; everything I had was taken. I thought I would try my chances at the game, if some gentleman would do me so great a favor to advance a small loan—"

"Say no more," interrupted the gallant sport. "Here, take my seat and play with my chips. They are yours, madame."

"Oh! thanks!" with great delight. "But, monsieur, *je suis mademoiselle*."

"Pardon my mistake, miss."

"It is already done," was the rejoinder, in sweetest French.

From the fact that Elegant Jo appeared to understand, it was taken for granted that he was acquainted with that language.

The woman sat down at the table, took note of the amount of the loan she had received, and began her play.

Everybody was interested, of course.

Deadwood Dick watched her play, and did not approve of it, in his mind, but fortune seemed to favor her, for she won. She played again, with like result. And yet again, the same.

"You are doing well," complimented Elegant Jo.

"I am in luck," was the response. "You can see that I am not playing with science."

She spoke with that sweet, slight accent which it is not necessary further to reproduce. In fact, it could hardly be done, with justice.

"Science has to take a back seat for luck, once in awhile," Elegant Jo rejoined.

Fairy Frank was slightly pale, but dealt the cards coolly and calmly, calling the play at each turn with even, steady tone.

Something was wrong, though, as close observers could see.

The looks she cast upon this new-comer were not by any means looks of love, and the remarks the mayor dropped now and again were but coldly received by the pretty banker.

The pile of chips in front of the Frenchwoman increased steadily, with only now and then a slight loss.

"How much have I won, saire?" she presently asked, turning to Elegant Jo.

"Your pile sums up close to a thousand dollars, I guess," was the answer the sport made.

"And how much of that is due you?"

The sport named the amount of the loan, but added:

"However, do not mention that; it is all yours. Please accept it as a gift from me."

"Oh! no; I cannot do that, saire. I will now stop, since I have won enough for my present needs. Pray take back what is due you."

She rose as she spoke, and her manner was so firm that it was not to be mistaken.

The sport presented the chips for cashing, and deducting the amount of the loan from the sum realized, gave the rest into the masked lady's hand.

"It is a favor I shall never forget, saire," she

said, in sweet tones. "Would you tell me your name?"

"My name is Jo St. John," was the polite response.

"I like the name. I shall not forget it, saire. Good-night."

"Pardon me," said the sport quickly, "but will you not allow me to see you safely to the hotel?"

"Would monsieur be so kind? Is it not imposing too much—"

"It will be a pleasure to do so," was the fervent interruption.

With a polite bow the elegant sport offered his arm, it was taken, and together the couple left the place.

Mayor MacCraw looked after them with beaming eye. This was something that for the moment gave him delight. He need not fear Elegant Jo as a rival for the favor of Fairy Frank after this.

"Jo has struck a mash, sure," he cried. "That little Frenchy has carried him right off his feet, darn me ef she hasn't. But, nobody cares, I guess; what do you say, Fairy Frank?"

He turned to her, to find her face quite pale indeed.

"This game is closed for to-night," she said, in her cool, even manner.

"Closed!" gasped the mayor. "Why, what is the matter, Fairy Frank?"

"I do not feel well, that is all, sir. If you desire to play longer, or if any one does, I will sell the bank."

"Play longer!" cried the mayor. "Play when the light has gone out? Well, I guess not! If you are done, so am I. May I have the same honor the little Frenchy gave to Jo? May I see ye to the hotel?"

"I prefer to go alone, sir. Manson," to one of the employees, "sell the bank to the highest bidder, or close the game at once."

And with that she was gone, leaving the mayor staring after her blankly.

CHAPTER XI.

YET ANOTHER ROBBERY APPEARS.

GREAT pestiferous old hambone what dis-severated ther caput mortem of old Golliar after David had binged him one in ther gullick!" ejaculated Old Avalanche the irrepressible. "Great meanderin' signs o' eradicatin' demoli-shun! I wish I was only young and purty like I uster be, and I'll bet I'd come in fer a share o' all this hyer beauty what's languishin' in distress!"

Here was a laugh from the crowd.

"How long is et sence you was that way, young and beautiful?" one fellow inquired.

"Immortalized hambone what relieved Joner of snakes in ther boots! Mebbly ye don't believe I used ter be purty. Time was when I could knock corrodin' spots o' time off 'n anything o' my size an' weight what walked on two pins, fer looks. That's what's ther matter with ther ma'r hyer; he ain't young an' pooty enough. That dandy patent-leather cuse hev walked off wi' both gals, sure as ye live. He's captured one, an' t'other is madder'n a singed rat."

"You mind your own business, old man," snarled the mayor.

"Oh! sartain: didn't mean ter give no 'fense. Facts is facts, though, and ye can't get around 'em nobow. Ther purty card-queen is mad as kin be cause t'other gal went off with her pet pard-elect, and you bet she will give him a bit of her mind when she gits him alone. You ain't in et, ma'r; great hambone, no!"

With an angry growl the mayor left the room.

The old scout had come about as close to the truth as he could get, and all present seemed to know it.

These departures seemed to take away the interest in the gaming-den for Deadwood Dick, so he and Billy went out and returned to the hotel.

There the mayor had just met Elegant Jo.

Mayor MacCraw looked as dark as a gathering storm, but the handsome sport was beaming and happy.

"Here's my hand on it, mayor," he cried, grasping the mayor's hand and giving it a hearty shake whether he would or not. "The field is yours, now."

"What are ye talking about?" growled the mayor.

"Why, about Fairy Frank, of course. I have been sort of chipping in against you there, but now I am done. You can have it all to yourself."

"Yes, dang you, after you have done the worst you can!"

"The worst I can! Do you call that the worst?"

Why, man, I am giving right up. This French lady is my game, now."

"And I reckon she's Fairy Frank's game, too, by the way she went off in a huff ther minnit you had gone out. You hev made a mess of et all around."

Elegant Jo drew a serious face at once.

"Whew!" he whistled. "Is this so, what you tell me?" he asked.

"Of course it's so, curse you! You have come in with that purty face of yours and stepped 'tween me and ther woman I love, and now she's stuck on you. By heavens! I've a notion to spoil your face for you."

The sport stepped back, and a sinister look came into his eyes.

"If you want to try it on, mayor, don't waste any sentiment over me, but go right in. Since it seems I have made a conquest of both of them, I'll take both, if I can get them to agree to such an arrangement."

And with that, the sport wheeled on his heel and left the mayor staring after him as he went to the bar and called for something he liked.

The excitement of the evening being over, as they believed, Dick and Billy retired to their room.

Being friends, they had arranged to occupy the same room.

"Well, what do you think of things in general and other things in particular?" Billy asked, when they were alone.

"I think there is going to be a ruction here before long," answered the Prince of the West. "For one thing, I am glad to see the mayor and Elegant Jo at outs. That will come in nicely."

"How so?"

"Well, as it was, they were friendly, but now the mayor will be against the sport, and when we bring things up with a round turn he will be the more easily convinced of the truth."

"That's so. But, I don't see how you can help pluggin' the fellow, Dick. I fairly itched to get hold of him, after all you had told me about him."

"I can wait—I must wait. I must have proof at hand when I act."

"That's so. Well, you will have help at hand, such as it is, for Old Avalanche and me's ready to wade right in when you give the signal."

"And you want to take care that you don't wade to your death, Billy. He is a desperate character."

"We'll take that out of him, I'm thinkin'."

Next morning there was excitement in the camp.

Posted up in a score of places about the camp was a notice, neatly printed on heavy card. It was like this:

"WARNING."

"TO RED ROY:—You are hereby given due warning that your career is about at an end. I am upon your track, and you are mine. There is no escape for you, so prepare to meet your doom."

"Avenger of DEADWOOD DICK, JR."

When Deadwood Dick's attention was called to it, as it was by Old Avalanche, in a quiet way, Dick marveled greatly.

No one he could think of could be playing this role, unless—he trembled at the ray of hope—unless it was Kate, who, somehow, had escaped the flood on that terrible night.

But the hope died out when he remembered the horrors of that night, the wild scream he had heard from the horses and from her, and the plunge into the mad waters. No; it were useless to dream of that.

"Great refrigerated old hambone!" cried Old Avalanche, as he had a chance to speak to Dick for a moment. "What d'ye make out of et, Dicky?"

"I simply give it up," answered Dick. "It is none of my doing, and I can't guess who has done it."

"Et shows ye hev a friend somewhar; by ther ragin' tempestuous cantankarams o' devastatin' demolishun, et does!"

"Yes; there is another foe in the field against the rascal, and I should like to know who it is. But, we are not likely to find out, for being bold enough to post notices like this, he is not going to give himself away."

"I opine you are right, Dicky, boy, every time."

"Do you s'pose he has got the rascal singled out?" questioned Billy Bucket.

"Hard to tell," answered Dick. "If he has, I don't know how he got his clew, for the fellow is playing his part mighty well."

"Great hambone o' perdishun what guzzled Joner in ther gullick! what's ther matter with ther ma'r? See how he's takin' on, will ye?"

Think I'll drop down thar an' take in ther sarcus."

The mayor was in front of the Rosebud Saloon, where he was brandishing his fists in a wild way, and, as far as could be noted, "going for" his chief of police in a very roughshod manner. Something had gone wrong somewhere, that was evident.

Dick and Billy had been for a stroll up the gulch, and returning, had met the old scout.

Old Avalanche hastened off ahead of them, they following more leisurely.

Mayor MacCraw had enough to make him act wildly. During the night there had been another visitation from Red Roy!

This time he had raided the Rosebud Saloon, opening the safe where Fairy Frank kept her capital, and making a clean sweep of everything. No wonder the mayor "howled."

"Then how in blazes did he get in hyer?" he was demanding, as Old Avalanche came within hearing distance.

"I don't know," confessed the chief, Waldon. "My men were doin' their duty all right, as they have told ye, an' et's a big mystery to us all."

"Yes, I should say it was a mystery. Your men have been asleep, that's what the mystery is."

"No," they protested, one and all, "not one of us has slept a single wink all night. We done fair and square duty, boss."

"Then how is et that ye don't know of anything that's been going on? Hyer is another thing, too; how did these notices get posted up all over town? Don't any of ye know anything about that?"

Not a soul of them did.

"That's more proof of what I say," the mayor raved. "Ef ye hadn't been all asleep some one would 'a' seen the cuss what put up these cards, even if ye didn't see nobody enter the saloon."

"But, I tell ye they wasn't asleep," cried Hank, in defense of his men. "I was out twicet during the night, and every man of 'em was at his post both times. Besides they ar' men ye hain't got no reason ter doubt, MacCraw. Every one of 'em is picked."

"And you say the trails were well guarded all night?"

"All of 'em, in ther best manner."

"And no stranger came in or went out?"

"Nary a one, sir."

"Then the truth is plain: the fellow has a secret way in and out from here, the same as he had at the Butte. What do you say, Elegant Jo?"

"It looks that way," answered the sport, "but there is no handy bluff with a cavern in it here, such as they say he made use of there, is there? I don't see how it has been done."

"Great hambone what consolidated on ther stummick of old Joner and kerflummuxed his diarframm!" cried Old Avalanche, chipping in with the rest. "Et hits me hard in a tender spot that et is plain enough when ye git on yer specks ter look at et clus enough."

"What do you know about et?" cried the mayor.

"Ravishin' tempests what devastated ther gardens o' Babylon! What do I know 'bout et? I don't know anything about et, but I kin put two an' two together an' sum 'em up straight every time. Ef ther guard was on duty, an' they swear they war; an' ef they done their duty right, an' et's ter be supposed they did; then ther cuss must be right hyer in ther camp!"

"By heavens! there may be something in that," cried the sport.

"I hadn't looked at et that way," said the mayor, thoughtfully.

In the heat of the excitement he had forgotten for the moment that he and Elegant Jo were at "outs" with each other.

He had appealed to Jo for his opinion, and that had given the sport the privilege, so to say, to offer whatever suggestion he might think worth offering.

"That's jest what I say," cried Avalanche. "Great hambone, that's what I'm shoutin'! See ther game he played at ther Butte, 'cordin' to all tell. Wouldn't he be jest as smart hyer as he was thar? Wull, I should say cats fer kittens! Not that I mean ter 'spect any one; hambone, no! but I was jest callin' 'tention to things in general."

"I agree with you," declared Elegant Jo. "He must be here, somewhere; but who is he?"

"Give et up."

"You see, it is not likely that he would appear in the same guise twice, and for that reason there is no telling how he is disguised," the sport added.

Deadwood Dick and Billy Bucket had now come up, and had heard the last few remarks.

Fairy Frank was standing at the door of the saloon, very pale.

She had gone to her safe for some purpose or other, and discovering that it had been rided, had reported to the mayor; and the mayor, in order to gain her regard, was putting on extra steam in the matter.

"Well, he ain't likely ter come and tell us who he is," the mayor philosophized, "and we ain't likely to get him till we find some clew first; and in the mean time thar is somethin' else of importance that must be seen to."

"What's that?" asked one.

"Why, Fairy Frank has been robbed of all the money she had, and she can't carry on her business. You all know how fair and square a game she has always carried on, and it's no more than just that we should help her to get another start. Now, how many will chip in? I will give two dollars for every one that is raised."

"Hyer's with ye!" cried one fellow who had been lucky at the game.

"An' hyer, too!" another followed immediately.

"But hyer's one what ain't," sung out another voice. "Fairy Frank hev scooped in too many o' my dollars a'ready. She's no better ter go w'out 'n I be."

"Allow me to make a suggestion," spoke up the elegant sport.

CHAPTER XII.

REASON DAWNING.

THE sport made a pause, to gain attention to what he had to say, and by the time he spoke everybody was ready to hear him. They wanted to know what he had to offer that was better than the mayor's plan.

"My idea is this," he said: "It is the right thing to help Fairy Frank, and I am more than willing to do so; but, I think a private loan would suit her much better than a general and public gift. The very nature of her business would make it so, I should think."

The woman stepped forward to speak for herself.

"Elegant Jo is right," she said. "In money matters, it is my hand against every man's, and I should not want to take any man's money and then win more from him on top of it. He would feel injured in a double sense. The feeling those who are losers have for me has just been well expressed. No; I prefer not to have it so. I will take a loan, paying interest, and so make it a matter of business and not of sentiment."

"I thought so," said the sport.

"Well, by darn, if that is your choice I'm the man to lend to you," cried the mayor. "And the interest won't be very high, either."

"I shall expect to pay as much as any one, sir, or I will not borrow, neither from you nor from any one else."

"Well, have your own way about it, then, but consider my pocketbook open wide to you, all the time."

"Thank you, sir."

"And I'll bring you any amount you want, to the extent of my pile, Fairy Frank. Don't be backward about saying how much."

"I will see you later regarding that, sir. But, meantime, please do all you can toward finding out the robber and recovering my own from him, if it is possible. I am heavily injured, if that is lost."

The mayor gave his promise in emphatic terms, and the woman drew out of the crowd and disappeared.

"Yes, this hyer thing has gone about far enough," the mayor exploded once more, then. "Red Roy has got to be run down and captured, or we may as well shut up shop here."

"An' what about this hyer feller what advertises ter avenge Deadwood Dick?" inquired one man.

"That's something that has set me to thinkin'," declared the mayor. "I sent for Deadwood Dick a good while ago, to come here and try his hand against Red Roy, and I have reason to think he started; but, he never got here; ien't ways I never seen him if he did. And now this thing seems to say that he has gone under. I tell ye what it is, men of Royal Flush, there is something going on under ther surface here, and I'm betting on it."

"That seems plain enough," agreed Elegant Jo. "But, if this avenger has any clew to the robber, he is foolish not to take you in with him, and so have the benefit of the help of your men. Don't you think so?"

"I sartainly do. And, I hereby proclaim to him, if he is within hearing of my voice, that I

will give him support and help at any time he may want it, though I would rather he'd take me into the thing with him, so that I could act knowingly about it."

"And here, too," chimed in the chief of police. "I need not say that I am ready and willing to do my part," said the sport. "I thought of making an offer personally, but did not want to cross you, mayor."

"What are you talkin' about?"

"Well, in that last remark I referred to the loan, which I was still thinking about."

"Oh! I see. But, it is not likely the lady would have accepted. I am in regular business, and she would naturally come to me."

The excitement did not abate readily.

That Red Roy could not be far away was positive, as the robbery proved, and that he was in the camp was altogether probable.

But, who was he? That was a question not so easily answered. They gave it up. Still, they meant to know, if it was possible to unearth him, and in order to stimulate men to the hunt, the mayor doubled the reward he had previously offered.

The police, or Vigilantes, were dismissed with instructions to be on hand again for duty at dark, and the mayor repaired to his office.

There another surprise awaited him. On his desk was a communication which read as follows:

"MAYOR MACCRAW:—

"When this falls into your hands it will be too late for you to search further for me, for I shall be miles on my way to a fresh stamping ground. Sorry to part with you so soon, but I guess I have made all I can out of you, and it has the appearance of getting pretty warm for me here.

"Very sincerely yours.

"Red Roy."

The mayor raved around again like a crazy man.

Here the rascal was beyond his reach, and there would now be little chance of his ever seeing the stolen money again.

When he had worn off the keen edge of his rage, he went out and made public the message he had received, and many a person in that camp drew a breath of relief to know the rascal was gone.

But, had he gone? We shall see.

During the day Elegant Jo was seen much in the company of Madalene Rousseau, the Frenchwoman.

She still wore her impenetrable veil, which must have been a source of great annoyance to him, for naturally he would have much curiosity to see her face.

They seemed to enjoy each other's company greatly, nevertheless, and it was plain to the least observing that the woman did not try in any measure to keep out of the sport's way.

Deadwood Dick was one of the most observing regarding this, and it puzzled him not a little.

He came to the conclusion that the woman was no stranger to the sport, as she appeared to be, but that they were working together for some purpose.

The day passed, and evening, with its usual rousing up of activity, came around.

"Are you going to the Rosebud again?" asked Billy Bucket of Dick.

"I am going to keep my eyes on this couple," was the answer, indicating the sport and the Frenchwoman.

They were then seated on the piazza of the hotel, and Elegant Jo was paying all the attentions a devoted lover could show.

"What do you think of 'em?" asked Billy.

"One of two things, Billy.

"What's them?"

"Either they are playing a game, as I think most probable, or the woman has captivated him in earnest."

"It looks so, that's true. S'pose I try to get on to what they are talking about."

"No use, here and now, Billy. That fellow is too keen for you, and he would tumble to you in short order."

"I'll chance it, if you say so."

"No; don't."

It was only a minute later when the couple rose and set out in the direction of the Rosebud Saloon.

"We'll go there, too," said Dick. "They are going around by the rear way, so we'll go in the front. Come along, Billy."

They crossed the street, and just as they were about entering they saw the crazy woman, Crazy Sal, coming hurriedly up from the direction of the Jeffert shanty.

"She's coming here again," said Dick, quietly. "There is going to be some fun before long, Billy."

They entered the place.

It was the same scene they had witnessed on the previous night, and they made their way at once to the gaming-room.

Here was the usual crowd, and Elegant Jo and Madalene Rousseau had taken seats at the faro-table, awaiting the coming of the pretty banker.

Just as Dick and Billy Bucket entered at one door, Crazy Sal came in at the other. She smiled to the crowd, with a bow, and took her place at the table with a queenly air.

Elegant Jo was seen to give a glance of disgust in her direction, and made a move as if to rise, but the Frenchwoman detained him.

"It is the woman you told me about, saire?" she asked in low tone. "What need it matter? Sit still and we will play with her for fun until the regular banker comes."

This was said with her charming accent, which the rascal seemed powerless to resist, and he settled down.

There was a dark look upon his face, however. With less regard for recognition than he had had on the previous evening, Deadwood Dick took a place near the table, where he could observe everything.

He saw at a glance that the light of reason was clearer in the crazy woman's eyes than it had been on the previous night. She took charge of the table with more of her old manner.

"Make your play, gentlemen," she said.

The Frenchwoman put some chips on one of the cards, one or two others followed her example, and the game was begun.

With her usual luck, the Frenchwoman won, and the dealer reached for chips with which to pay her loss. They were not at hand, and she looked vexed.

Turning around, she called the name of one of the men who had been in her employ when she was known as Queen of Hearts, and was proprietress of the Palace Saloon at Basalt Butte.

There was no response, and she called again.

Now thoroughly vexed, she excused herself to the players and rose to wait upon herself.

She started in the direction which, in the old place, would have led to the saloon proper, but which, here, took her to one of the walls where there was no door.

Reaching the wall, she groped for the door for a moment, like a person in the dark, then pressed her hand to her head and looked around in a dazed manner. The blank look had returned, and now she cried out:

"Save him, oh! save him!"

"Mon Dieu! how pitiful it is!" cried the Frenchwoman.

"It is too bad they allow her to come here," declared the sport. "I will see that they are more watchful of her."

Fairy Frank entered just then, and taking in the situation, directed one of her men about the saloon to take the woman home. This was done, and the game was opened regularly.

The mayor was on hand shortly after the arrival of the gambler queen, as attentive as ever, and the evening went off without further excitement. The Frenchwoman was as lucky as ever, and rose from the table a considerable winner. Was she playing for business or pastime?

CHAPTER XIII.

DEADWOOD DICK IN DEEP DOUBT.

ON the following morning the dandy sport made it his business to see Mrs. Jeffert regarding the crazy woman. It was a shame, he told her, that the woman should be permitted to leave the house at night, to visit such a place as the saloon. To which Mrs. Jeffert pleaded that it was not wholly her fault, since she could not watch the woman every minute.

"I have taken some interest in this woman," Elegant Jo declared, "and I will make it an object to you to see that she does not come there again. That woman has a history, I am sure, and we should take the best of care of her and give her a chance to regain her reason."

"Seems to me her reason is comin' back," said Mrs. Jeffert.

"What makes you think that?"

"Why, she don't go on like she did, and once in awhile she will talk quite right."

"What does she have to say?"

"Oh, not very much; but seems to think she is talking to the one she calls Harry."

"Well, maybe she will come all right. Anyhow, here is extra money for you, and perhaps it will pay you for the trouble of being a little more watchful of her. See that she does not come to the saloon again, at any rate."

"I will do the best I can, sir."

"That is all I ask. Not that it is anything

to me, you know, but somebody must make it his business to look after the poor soul a little."

And with that Mr. St. John took his leave.

"Not that it's anything to you, eh?" muttered Billy Bucket as he at the same time moved away from a window where he had listened. "And as to lookin' after the poor soul, we'll do that, you bet."

Mrs. Jeffert did not see Billy, as she was looking after the retreating figure of the elegant sport, and from him to the figure on the bill he had left in her hand. She drew back into the house, shaking her head in a knowing way and folding the money and putting it in her pocket.

"He ain't takin' all this interest fer nothin'," she mused. "He might 'a' made me think so if he hadn't paid me money, but I know he knows somethin' about this crazy woman. I wonder what she has been to him? I'm going to keep my ears open and find out."

Billy Bucket strolled leisurely to the hotel, where he found Dick in his favorite seat on the piazza.

"What have you been up to now?" asked Dick.

"Why?" queried Billy.

"I saw you shadowing the sport, at long range, and then you closed up suddenly when he disappeared down yonder."

"Mighty little you don't see, I guess. I thought I was doing that right up in high G."

"You were doing it well enough, but I saw what you were at. What did you follow him for?"

"I wanted to see what he was up to, and I found out. He's been down to see that woman who takes care of Crazy Sal, and he's made it right with her to keep Sal away from the saloon."

"Hal! it is worth something to know that. I shall have to see the man Jeffert, and see what can be done on the other hand. Jeffert rules the roost, and a counterbalance fee will probably work things to suit us."

"You bet it will. And then to-night you are going to open on the cuss, are you not?"

"Yes; if the men from Basalt Butte get here, and I hope they will."

"So do I; I'm just dyin' to see the fun!"

"It may not be funny for some of us, Billy, if the fellow gets a ghost of a chance. I warn you in time to look out for his poppers."

"I'll look out for them, and him, too. If we three, you, me, and Old Avalanche, can't round him up, then it will be queer."

"Oh! we shall get him, but we may get something else at the same time. It is that I mean."

"Well, we'll look out for him, and he won't get much of a show."

As usual, Elegant Jo, and the Frenchwoman were seen much together, and the sport seemed to be completely infatuated with his *incognita*.

It was after dinner when they were seated on the piazza, that Deadwood Dick managed to overhear something of their talk together. He was in the hotel parlor, with the blinds closed.

"When may I hope to have the pleasure of beholding your face?" the sport was heard to ask.

He spoke in low tone, but they were near the window, and Dick heard plainly.

"It may be a pleasure that will bring with it disappointment," was the reply, with the woman's charming accent.

"And how a disappointment?"

"Why, men admire beautiful women, and you may find that I am far from being beautiful."

"I cannot believe that. And even if it be so, your excellence of character and charm of manner will make up for it all."

"You think so?"

"I do. But permit me to see and judge."

"No, no; not now; some other time I will remove the veil."

"And when is that time to be? I am impatient. I am tempted to remove it myself with a quick movement which you could not hinder."

"Do not do it," was the firm warning. "If you did that, all would be at an end between us. Perhaps I may be able to grant you your request to-night. I do not promise, however."

"Then I will wait. But there is surely a reason for your wearing a mask, is there not?"

"There is a reason, saire; I would not wear it were there not. But, do not ask me now what it is. I will tell you soon."

"Very well, I will not press you."

"There is a person who may be here whom I do not want to see me. When that person is no longer in the way, then I will appear as my natural self."

"And who is the person?"

"I cannot tell you that, now. You shall know soon."

"Very well, I will not press you to tell me, for I would not incur your displeasure."

"I hope you will not do so, truly. But, can we not go for a walk? Not far, you know; just for a stroll, as we did yesterday. I was delighted."

The sport responded gallantly, and they left the piazza.

Deadwood Dick was puzzled. He could not make out what this woman's object was.

One thing was now plain, and that was, that they were strangers to each other, and not partners, as he had half suspected.

That view removed, it was narrowed down to— But, speculation was so useless that he gave it up, and sauntering out, took his accustomed seat on the piazza.

He watched the sport and the woman as they went up the gulch, and the more he thought of the matter the more it baffled him. Either the woman was really taken with the sport, or she was playing him for a purpose.

When the afternoon stage came in it brought a good many strangers, mostly men, among whom was one big fellow with bushy hair, but with a face shaved clean.

He was clad in the oddest of suits, too.

He wore a white shirt without any collar, and a long black coat that looked like some priest's cast-off. His trousers were of the roughest sort, and clung to the lower part of his legs with a fold, showing that they had been long worn in boots. A pair of shoes now incased the fellow's feet.

Looking about him, as if to see if he recognized anybody, he went into the house with the others.

When he registered it was as—"Tug Bartin, of Cheyenne."

He was a man of few words, and seemed to be alone. Most of the others were in pairs, so to say.

Deadwood Dick entered the bar-room presently, and after looking over the crowd singled this big fellow out and spoke to him.

They drew aside at once. "Great storm-king!" the stranger exclaimed, in low tone, "is this you?"

"It is what's left of me, at any rate," assured Dick. "I came pretty near getting used up, I tell you."

"I should say ye did, by the livin' Jupiter! But, ye tell me ye have got ther cuss dead to rights now. Who is he and where is he?"

"Yes, we have him now. But, you must be careful about these pet phrases of yours, or you will give yourself away. Take care not to use them at all. You would be recognized at once."

"Oh! I'll be keeful; no one can overhear us, and I won't use 'em when I'm speakin' louder."

"All right, take care you don't. Now, I'll give you the points."

Thereupon Dick gave a brief history of the case, bringing it down to the moment, disclosing all he knew of the matter. He outlined, too, his plan of action.

"Great—flip-flaps!" Mr. Bartin exclaimed.

"You see we have got him tight."

"I should say ye had! Ef we don't make him weep I miss my guess, that is all."

They did not talk a great while together, not wanting to attract attention, but presently parted and were not seen to speak to each other again.

Dick next sought an interview with Old Avalanche, on the quiet.

This was easily arranged, and no one could suspect, for Dick was rapidly making friends in the camp, and it was only natural that he should talk to men who spoke to him.

"Great tremenjus an' overpowerin' signs o' meanderin' demolishun!" the old fellow exclaimed. "Thar is gore on ther moon, Dicky, boy, sure as ye live. Great antaggernistick old hambone, yes!"

"What do you mean?" asked Dick.

"Jest what I say. That 'ar liddle Frenchy woman ar' jest a tiger! Her claws ar' hid under ther softest kind o' velvet, but they ar' long an' sharp, you kin bet on't."

"Well, Alva, explain what you mean."

Dick well knew the old scout had found out something, and was eager to learn what it was.

"Wull, I was up ther gulch thar, sort o' rumination' on things in general and other things in p'tic'lar, when leetle Frenchy meandered up that way alone. Mebbey ye seen her."

"Yes; I know she went up that way."

"Hambone! but et makes me feel creepy yet, ther way she said et! Ye see, I was behind a boulder, next to ther crick, an' she couldn't see me. She stopped thar, and lookin' all around, she begun ter pray—actooly pray! Great resus-

serkated old hambone o' demolishun! et put a lump in my throat ter hear her!"

"You astonish and interest me, Avalanche," said Dick. "What did she pray about?"

"That's ther p'int, as ther bumblebee said when he probed his stinger into ther Injun; and ther Injun allowed he seen et. She didn't mention no names, but she got right down ter biz; hambone, yes! She prayed mostly fer strength an' courage ter carry out her plans, whatever they was. Then when she got up she raised her hand to heaven and took a vow that made my old blood run cold. Et did: sigus o' demolishun, yes!"

"And what was her oath?"

"Et was to ther 'fect, sum an' substance, that somebody had ter pass in his chips 'fore ther game would close. Ter tell ther truth, I was that shooked up that I can't remember ther words of et, but et let me see that ther gal ain't ther purrin' leetle kitten she seems ter be, not by a good deal. She's got claws under them 'ar velvet paws, as I said afore; hambone, yes!"

Deadwood Dick was thoughtful.

Who and what could this strange woman be? What was the wrong she had to avenge? Was Red Roy her prey?

He questioned Old Avalanche further, but the old scout had told all he could tell, and could not gratify his curiosity. Another thought struck Dick, however, and he asked:

"One thing more, Alva; did the woman still have that French accent when she prayed, and when she made her desperate vow, and you have told me about?"

"Great original old hambone!" the old fellow cried. "I never thort of that, Dicky, boy. She didn't, not a tall; she talked jest as good United States as you kin talk yerself; hambone, yes!"

Dick strode abruptly away. Was it possible? Could it be possible! Could it be that this was Kate, his lost wife, in disguise? He decided not; and yet— No, no, it could not be. That thought had come to him before, and he had watched the woman too closely to be deceived. Who, then, was she?

CHAPTER XIV.

A THRILLING REVELATION.

OLD Avalanche looked after Dick for a moment in amazement, and started after him. He did not know what to make of such conduct as this, on the part of his *protege*. What had he done to Dick? He would see about it!

He soon overtook him, and laying hold upon his arm, exclaimed:

"Great bamboozled hambone o' degenerate days! what's ther matter, Dicky? I reckon ye forgot ter say good-by, didn't ye?"

"Pardon me, old friend," was Dick's answer. "A sudden thought seized me, and I was overcome. But, I have work for you to do, if I haven't offended too greatly."

"Sarcumventin' cataracks o' thunderin' destruction! Dicky, I was only foolin'. Whatever ye have fer me ter do, jest out with et, and I'm yer orderly; hambone, yes!"

"All right. Well, I want you to look up that man, Bob Jeffert, on the quiet, and tell him I want to see him at the hotel. Tell him to come as if just happening along, and to stop and speak to me rather by accident than by design. Be sure no one overhears you."

"All right, Dicky, you kin trust ther great original fer that."

So, Avalanche went off, and Dick took his place on the piazza, where he had bathed in the sun for many an hour and seen his strength grow with each hour that passed.

Just before supper-time Bob Jeffert came along.

He shambled down the street, and was passing the piazza when he looked up, as if by chance, and on seeing Dick, paused to inquire:

"Well, sick man, how 're ye comin' on?"

He had played his part well.

"I am gaining slowly I think," was the answer. "Step up here for a moment; I would like to speak to you."

Bob stepped up the steps and leaned against the post.

"I want you to do a favor for me," said Dick, quietly. "I will pay you well, and it is very simple and easily done."

"What is et?"

"I want you to fix things so that Crazy Sal can get out of the house to-night and come to the saloon again. It is very important, and you will not regret it."

"Thunder! my wife has been paid a'ready fer keepin' her in so's she can't get thar. What's

in ther wind, that et's so mighty 'portant whether she's thar or whether she ain't?"

"I'll tell you. I don't know how much your wife has received, but I will give you an even hundred dollars if you will see to it that she has the chance—"

"Say no more, sir; I'm your cheesel!"

"All right. You see, and you must keep this perfectly quiet. It is thought this Crazy Sal is Red Roy's former companion, and it is believed that her presence at the saloon will be the means of finding him out. I take you to be a square fellow, Mr. Jeffert, and I know you lost by the robbery of MacCraw's bank and would like to get even—"

"Nuff said, sir. I'll do anything that promises to bring Red Roy to account, and I'm mum, too. But, who are you?"

"May I trust you? Will you keep the secret to yourself alone?"

"I will, I swear et."

Dick had already given him the money, on the sly.

"Well, I am Deadwood Dick, Junior. There, now, say nothing, but saw wood."

Dick waved the fellow off, with that, and Jeffert went, looking back once or twice, as if hardly able to believe he had heard aright, and after him at a safe distance went Billy Bucket, to see that he kept the agreement.

The Rosebud Saloon was ablaze with light, and the night's excitement and round of dissipation was beginning.

Dancing, drinking and card-playing were the order of things; there is little of importance besides, in your wild, booming camp, when the orb of day has withdrawn his revealing countenance.

Deadwood Dick, Old Avalanche, Billy Bucket, the stranger from Cheyenne—Tug Bartin, and others with whom we have to do were in the gaming-room. The mayor, too, was on hand, but Fairy Frank had not yet put in her appearance. Neither had Madalene Rousseau and Elegant Jo.

The place was well filled, as if everybody seemed to know, intuitively, that something out of the usual order was about to take place.

Somehow there seemed to be a hush about the place, like that attending a funeral, or the wait in a court-room when the jury is about to appear to announce its decision upon a great case.

This was felt and noticed by everybody, and some few tried to break the spell by hilarious remarks, but it was a failure.

The rear door opened, and into the place came Elegant Jo, escorting the mysterious Frenchwoman veiled as usual.

Their coming seemed to bring new life into the room, and they took their places at the table cheerfully.

"Just this time, I will try my luck, saire," remarked the Frenchwoman, with a light laugh, "and then that must be the last time. I shall lose my head if I do not stop."

"Time enough to stop when luck turns," responded Jo. "Not before."

They chatted on, the woman as merry, seemingly, as possible, and her sweet, French accent lent a charm to all she said.

The door opened again, and in came—Crazy Sal!

With an angry imprecation Elegant Jo sprang to his feet, and would have left the table had not his companion caught his hand and detained him.

"How foolish of you!" she chided. "Do not spoil my evening's pleasure, the last I am to have."

"Curse it!" he cried, "I am tired of playing with a mad woman for dealer!"

With her bow as before, Crazy Sal had swept to her place, and the sport sat down, resting his head on his fingers carelessly.

"Make your play, gentlemen!"

The voice was like that of the Queen of Hearts of old, and Elegant Jo tried to avert his face still more from her.

Fairy Frank entered at that moment.

At sight of Elegant Jo and the Frenchwoman her face clouded.

"Make your play, gentlemen," the crazy woman repeated, and this time she scanned the faces around the table.

"Are you not going to play to-night, Handsome Harry?" she inquired, looking straight at Elegant Jo. "Surely, you are not afraid of the tiger!"

The sport's face was pale, but he laughed lightly.

"She mistakes me for some one else," he said aside. "Shall I humor her and see what it will

"come to? It may be the means of finding out something more about her. I'll try it anyhow."

The woman looked at him wonderingly, not able to understand this unusual action.

"Why, no; I do not mistake, Harry," she said. "I know you well enough. Who is this with you? What do you mean by saying that I mistake you for some one else? Why, everybody here knows you are Handsome Harry Stacey, the sport."

"Great convarted old hambone of ther gardens o' Babylon!" sung out Old Avalanche, just then. "Great ring-tailed an' twisted tokens of epperdemnick demolishun! Ain't that ther name of ther cuss they proved ter be Red Roy, over ter Basalt Butte? Et hits me hard—"

There was a buzz in the room, and the sport was upon his feet in a second.

"Keep cool, gentlemen," he said, "keep cool, now! I begin to see into this thing. This woman must be the one who was with Red Roy there at the Butte, and she now mistakes me for him. It is plain, don't you think so? We are coming to light, now, I think."

"Dissected old hambone what made Joner jump fer joy!" cried Old Avalanche. "This hyer begins ter get interestin', dog my cats ef et don't! Hyer this woman calls ther sport Handsome Harry, which is just ther same as callin' him Red Roy an' be done wi' et; and et hits me hard in ther gullick that he'd orter show up ther proof who he is."

"That's so," chimed in another, one who was not too friendly with the sport.

The giant stranger, Tug Bartin, with another fellow almost as big as himself was behind the sport and within easy reach of him.

"Old man, you have got too much to say," cried Elegant Jo, now pale to the lips. "Am I to be accused upon the mere fancy of a woman who is known to be crazy? I appeal to the loyal men of this camp. Gentlemen, allow me to escort this lady back to the hotel, and I will then give you all the proof you can ask."

"Please permit me to say one word," requested the Frenchwoman, quietly rising from her seat. "I think I can settle this question, for I happen to know who this gentleman really is."

The sport cast a quick look at her, but she gave him no sign.

"Ladies to ther front, allus," said Old Avalanche. "Nobody kin deny ye ther right ter toot yer dainty bugle, I opine. Let's hear from ye, leetle Frenchy."

The woman had spoken with her delicate French accent.

Elegant Jo had his hands in position ready to drop them upon weapons, if occasion required.

Deadwood Dick had noted this, and a quiet sign from him caused Tug Bartin and the man with him to move yet nearer. A climax was at hand.

"I have said that I know the gentleman," the woman went on, "and I am ready to prove it. Permit me to lift my veil, that you may see my face, for to some of you I am no stranger."

With her words she put her hands to her head, and the next moment the veil dropped.

At the same time her arm shot out toward Elegant Jo's face, and a derringer was in her grip, she having taken the weapon from her coil of hair!

The sport grew perfectly agast, and stepped back, but the weapon was held straight at his head, and the woman's voice rung out, now in the best of English, and in a tone of deepest hatred.

"Yes, I know the gentleman!" she cried. "I know him to be the outlaw, Red Roy, thief, assassin, and ten times a murderer! Only a month ago he murdered my husband, Deadwood Dick, Junior, and I took upon myself the vow to run him to earth, and I have! Move one finger, you detestable cut-throat, and you are a dead man, as you should have been long ago!"

CHAPTER XV.

TRE TANDEM TEAM TRIUMPHS.

How portray the excitement of the moment?

It was she, Kodak Kate; the brave, noble and peerless Kate!

A cry of joy escaped from Deadwood Dick at the revelation, and he sprang forward.

Already the outlaw—for Elegant Jo and Red Roy were one—had tried to draw his weapons, but, at a signal from Dick he had been seized behind, and was helpless in the grasp of Tug Bartin, his helper, and others.

"Kodak Kate!" was the cry. And immediately after—

"Deadwood Dick!"

Seeing the rascal safe, Dick caught Kate to his breast and kissed her fondly, regardless of the crowd.

"Heavens!" he cried. "Is it you, Kate—my Kate—alive and well?"

"And is it you, my husband?" cried she. "I have mourned you as dead. Thank God you are alive!"

The outlaw was raving and struggling, declaring his innocence and pleading for a chance to prove who he was. His struggles were vain, however.

"Great storm-king!" cried one of the captors, "don't ye s'pose we know ye? I reckon we do, then; by ther living jingo, yes! This cuss is ther outlaw, me chiidrun, and don't ye doubt it!"

"Rah fer our side!" cried Old Avalanche. "Hip, hip, hurrah! Hambone!"

Fairy Frank stood pale and trembling, looking at the prisoner with eyes wildly dilated.

The crazy woman, "Crazy Sal," the Queen of Hearts of the preceding story, had risen, excited, and now was off in one of her spells again.

"This is what I like ter see," cried Billy Bucket. "We have got the bulge on ye, my fine laddy, and you bet there won't be any foolishness now. You have been bagged at last."

Impossible to quote all that was said.

In spite of his protests, the outlaw had been securely bound, and was now forced down upon a chair.

"Thar he is, citizens o' Royal Flush!" cried Tug Bartin. "Thar is no mistake, fer I know him! I am Mayor Archibald Grimm, of Basalt Butte, minus my big whiskers—that's who I am, and I am here after this very cuss!"

Men and women had packed into the room until it was jammed, and the excitement was at a white heat. Nothing like it had the camp of Royal Flush ever seen before.

Deadwood Dick got upon the faro table, motioned the crowd to silence, and as soon as he could be heard, spoke.

"Citizens," said he, "there is no mistake, as Mayor Grimm of Basalt Butte has assured. This man is Red Roy, the Oregon Outlaw. A month or more ago, on that terrible night, I was coming to this place with my wife in response to a call I had received from your mayor, when this villain met us in the canyon, shot at me, and then engaged me, hand to hand. We were armed with knives, but he had on a steel shirt and I found it impossible to harm him, while he cut me up in a horrible manner and left me for dead. But, you did not kill me, you knave! and I had registered a vow to run you down if it took a lifetime to do it!"

"No, I was not dead, and I was found and rescued by my old friend Avalanche, who was also the friend of the original Deadwood Dick before me. He nursed me through, and I came here with the intention of unearthing this vile scoundrel and showing him up in his true light. Not only that, but I meant to avenge upon him the death of my wife, for I believed her to be dead. I believed she had gone down in the raging canyon torrent, and that I should never behold her again. I thank God for his goodness in restoring her to me. It was my intention this night, having sent to Basalt Butte and brought men to stand as proof for the charge I would make, to expose the execrable villain, but learning by chance that my wife—I did not know who she was then—was after him, for some purpose, I thought I would let her have the first chance. You have seen the result, and how my men were ready to help her when the crisis came. Need I say more? There is your prisoner, Mayor MacCraw; do with him as you please!"

"Permt me to speak," said Kodak Kate quickly. "On that terrible night my horse wheeled suddenly in the darkness, knocking Dick's horse into the water, and dashed away with me up the trail. I could not manage him, and the last I remember was being carried on through the storm at a rapid pace. When next I knew anything I was in a rancher's cabin, being cared for by his wife. They told me they had found me beside the trail not a great distance from their cabin. I recovered, came here in disguise, and began inquiry for my husband. I could learn nothing, and believed him dead. On the occasion of my coming here, however, I discovered Red Roy, and took oath that I would avenge Dick's death. You have seen how I planned my play, and with what success. But for the interruption that came, the dog would now be dead at your feet, slain by my hand! Thank Heaven I have found my husband alive! Dick, I did not know you; never once suspected who you were. Providence has had much to do with this affair, and we have, indeed, much to be thankful for."

"Nor did I know you," declared Dick, "though I thought of the possibility that it

might be you. You played the role to perfection."

"As I had to do," was the rejoinder, "to deceive such a man as Red Roy."

"And thank Heaven this revelation has been made here and now," suddenly spoke Fairy Frank. "Elegant Jo had won my love, by his attentions, and I confess that I was deeply jealous of you. Murder was in my heart almost, and no knowing what desperate deed I might have done."

"I saw that," answered Kate, "and was eager to have the revelation over with as soon as possible."

"And curse you for the deceiver you are!" grated the prisoner. "You played a cute game, but you would never have won it had it not been that everything was against me."

"You mistake, ill-begotten whelp that you are! As I said before, had these men not laid hold upon you, you would now be dead on this floor. I had taken oath to kill you, believing that you had slain my husband. How I despise and hate you, you monster!"

And yet this was scarcely a tithe of all that was said.

Everybody was talking, and there was a loud demand, growing ever louder, to have the outlaw lynched.

"Your time had come, Red Roy," remarked Deadwood Dick. "There was no further escape for you. May you find more mercy in the next world than you are likely to find here. I leave you to your fate."

And with that, Dick and Kate left the place, eager to be alone to talk over events that had come to pass since they had seen each other.

"Cantankerous cantagrams o' currogated demolishun!" cried Old Avalanche. "I am of ther opine that a rope an' a limb ar' what this critter is in need of. He's too p'izen bad ter live any longer; hambone, yes."

"Deadwood Dick and his pard wound him up this time," remarked Billy Bucket.

"And it's short shrift we'll give him," declared Mayor MacCraw, grimly. "Waldon, call up your men and we'll make a quick exit for him."

"Great storm-king, yes!" agreed Mayor Grimm, of the Butte. "He deserves a neck-pull for every one of his victims. But, somebody take this hyer woman off out o' ther way; she mustn't be hyer to see et."

This referred to the crazy Queen of Hearts, who was raving again, calling upon somebody to save him. She was taken away and cared for, and the crowd awaited the coming of the chief of police and his men.

The prisoner had now regained his nerve, and was, perhaps, the coolest-appearing man in the place. He warned the mayor that if he should be hanged he, the mayor, would never regain the money that had been stolen from him. The mayor hesitated for a moment, but soon decided: Whether the stolen money was ever recovered or not, the outlaw should swing for the deeds he had done.

The Vigilantes were soon on hand, and—But, we draw the curtain.

The morning sun found the body of the handsome but heartless outlaw swinging to the limb of a convenient tree. It was taken down and buried, and the career of Red Roy, the terror of the Northwest, was at an end. The Tandem Team had a Full Score at last, but the fight had been a long campaign. Satan never owned an mp of more diabolical attributes.

Dick and Kate set about looking for the money the rascal had stolen, and succeeded in finding most of it. Mayor MacCraw was happy, as was also Fairy Frank, and in their mutual good fortune they came to an understanding regarding something else, and a wedding was announced.

Old Avalanche and Billy Bucket set out for Pistol Pocket, Dick's own camp, where they were to await the coming of their patron. Dick and Kate set out for the Southwest, where Dick intended to spend some weeks in a quiet way on the seashore.

It was only a few days later when the crazy woman, Queen of Hearts, or Ariel Parmiter—her true name, died, and she was buried beside the man whom she had loved. A sad fate had been hers, but no one said she had not deserved it.

THE END.

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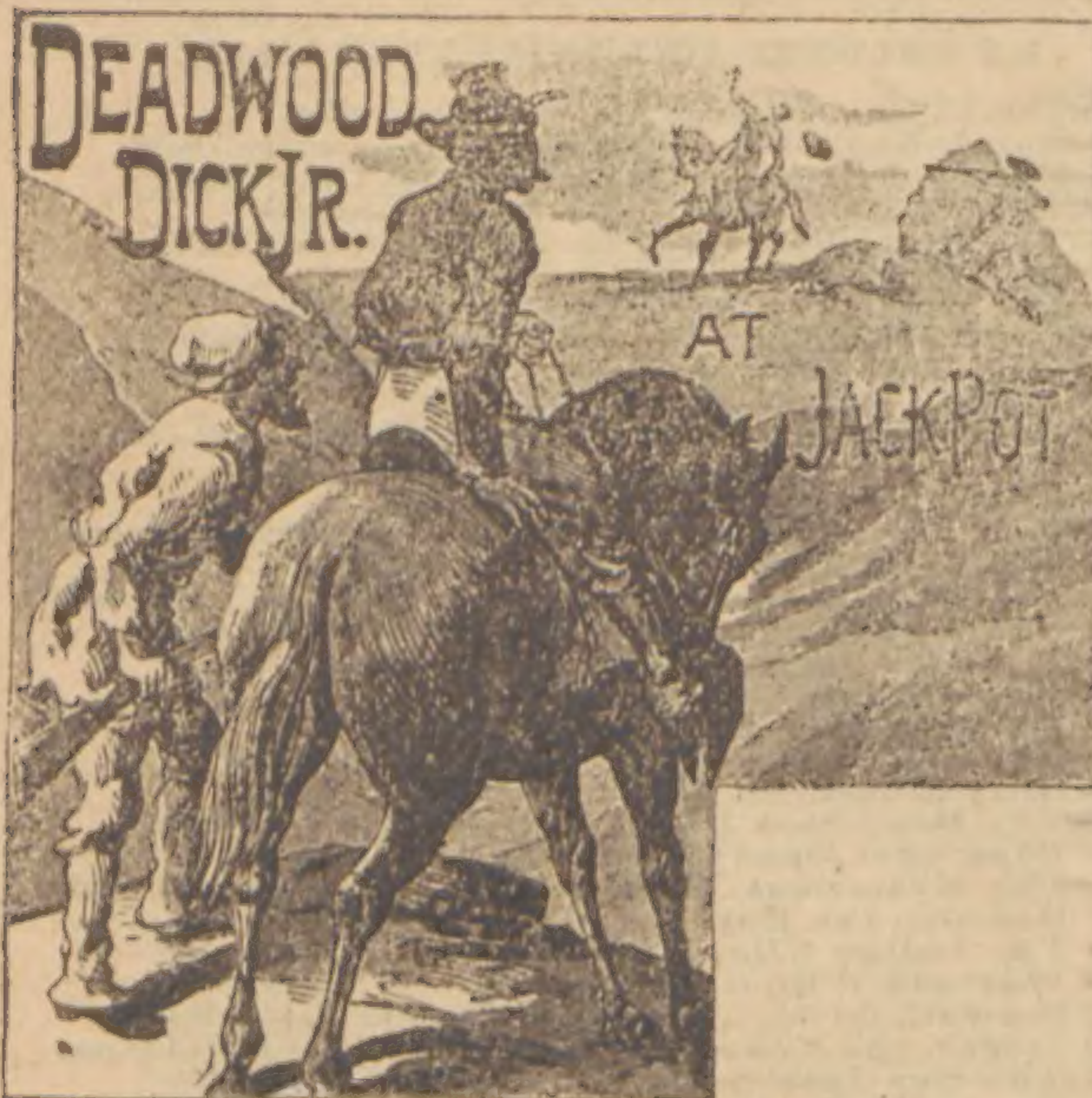
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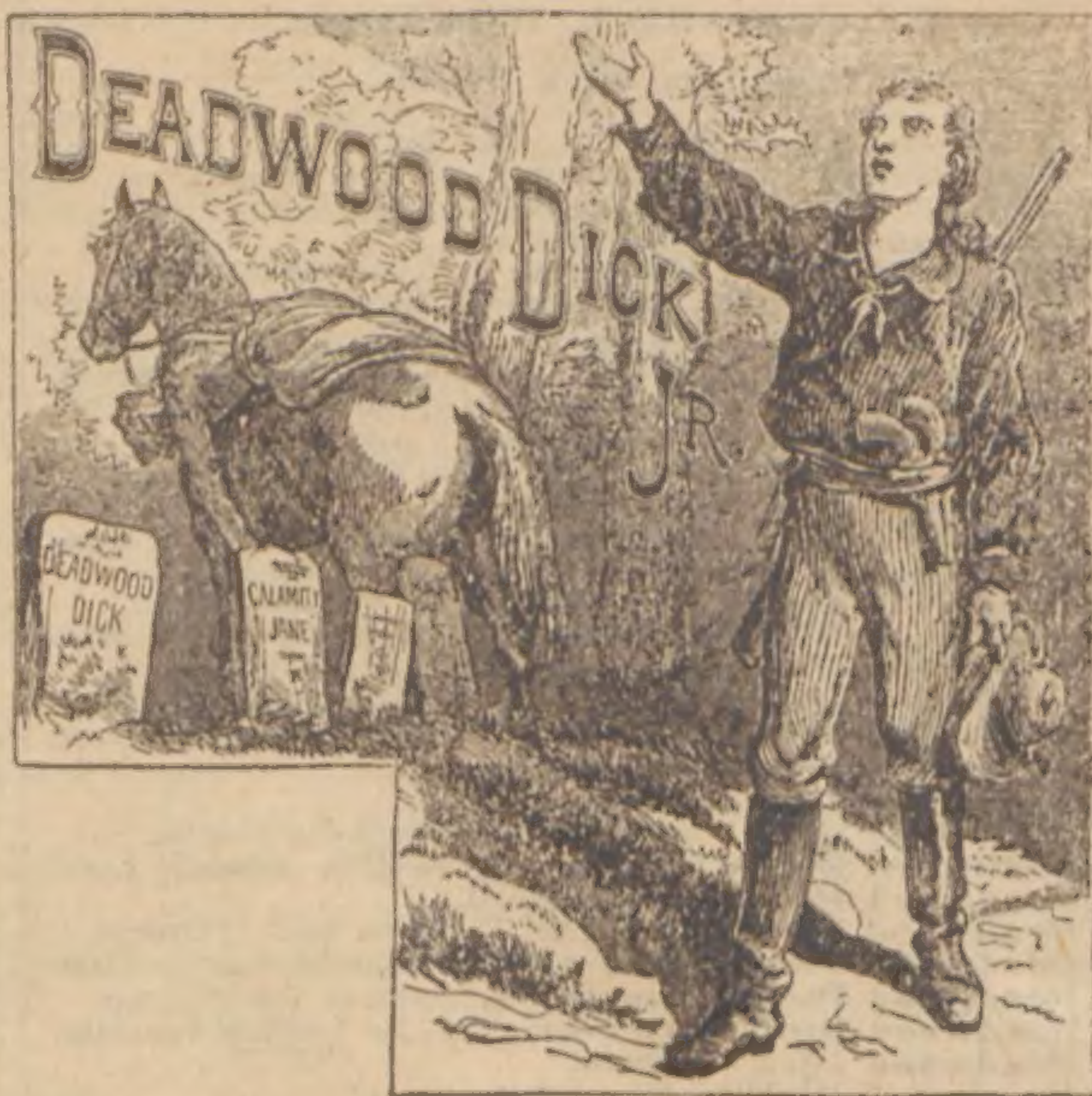
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